

FACT SHEET on Act 62 - Prekindergarten Education

What Does Act 62 Mean for FAMILIES with Young Children?

Act 62, which established publicly funded prekindergarten education, became effective in 2007. The Act recognizes that “a child’s growth and development occur best in integrated environments” and “are best provided in locations that are convenient to families and minimize transitions for children.” It acknowledges that “the provision of early care and prekindergarten education through high quality private providers is one of the most crucial elements supporting the strengths and stability of the system serving young children.”

Offering Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Education is a Local Decision

School districts are not required to offer publicly funded prekindergarten education (pre-K), and children are not required to attend pre-K. The decision of whether to offer pre-K ultimately is decided by the town’s school board and voters.

- ☞ The most direct way to find out if your school district offers pre-K is to contact the supervisory union or school district office. You could also check the online Directory of Act 62 Programs at:
http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pgm_earlyed/prekindergarten/educ_prek_program_directory.pdf

If a school district plans to begin or expand a pre-K program, it must first implement a comprehensive community needs assessment. The purpose of the needs assessment is to assess current needs and capacity, and to do an inventory of existing providers.

- ☞ It is important for you to participate in any community needs assessment your school district conducts so that you may inform the district about your needs and preferences.

How Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Works

In Act 62, publicly funded pre-K is defined as a 6 to 10 hour per week program for 3- to 5-year-olds during the academic year (i.e., a minimum of 35 weeks). Prekindergarten education is offered in a variety of settings: in center-based child care programs, home-based child care programs, Head Start classrooms, private preschool programs, and in public schools. School districts often partner and contract with **qualified** community care and education programs in order for them to provide pre-K education.

- A “qualified” provider is one that meets the following quality standards:
 - Are licensed by the Child Development Division (CDD) and are in good regulatory standing,
 - Are NAEYC accredited, or have 4 or 5 STARS in Vermont’s Step Ahead Recognition System (or 3 STARS with an approved plan to obtain 4 STARS within 3 years),
 - Use curricula aligned with Vermont’s Early Learning Standards,
 - Provide opportunities for parent participation, and
 - Have a licensed early childhood or early childhood special educator. In the case of registered family child care homes, at least three hours per week of regular onsite supervision by a licensed teacher can be used in lieu of the provider possessing the license.
- ☞ For more information about the quality standards for STARS or NAEYC go to the following websites:
<http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/stars/>
<http://www.naeyc.org/accreditation>



Department of Education
Department for Children and Families

School District and Community Early Care & Education Partnerships

When a school district partners with a qualified provider, a contract between the school district and the provider that clearly states the responsibilities of both parties and the terms of compensation is written. There are many possible arrangements for a partnership, such as:

- The district provides a licensed teacher and possibly provides the provider with professional development or a lump payment.
- The district pays a set amount to the provider for each child the district includes in its school census. In this case, the provider may not charge families tuition for the 6-10 hours per week of pre-K education the district pays for. If the district pays less than the “actual costs” of the pre-K education, then the provider may charge families the difference between the actual costs and the district’s payment. Providers must use the state’s required Actual Costs template to calculate its costs for pre-K.

Act 62 states that parents can request a district enter into a contract with a qualified child care center or registered family child care home either in or outside of the district. Qualified providers may also request that the school district enter into a contract with them so that they can serve the district’s pre-K children. When the request is made, the school district is required to consider it and respond in writing within 30 days.

How is Prekindergarten Education Funded?

Publicly funded pre-K education is funded in the same way that K-12 education is funded in Vermont. The funds needed to support the program, whether through a contract with a qualified provider or in a public school operated program, are included in a town’s school budget. If the town approves the budget, then the town receives the money it approved from the Education Fund. The Education Fund gets the bulk of its money from the state’s property taxes.

A town’s property tax rate to support school funding is based on the school district’s Average Daily Membership (ADM) calculated by the number of children the town counts in its annual school census. Prekindergarten children are equivalent to about 40% of a full-time student in K-6. Adding a prekindergarten program *may* lower a town’s tax rate because it increases the town’s ADM.

However, Act 62 sets a cap or limit on the number of prekindergarten children a school district can include in its school census, unless the district includes a school that has failed to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). In these districts, the pre-K cap is lifted.

☞ For Additional Information on the following topics, go to the link that appears below the topic:

Act 62

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/legdoc.cfm?URL=/docs/2008/acts/ACT062.HTM>

Prekindergarten Rules

<http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/board/rules/2600.pdf>

Vermont Early Learning Standards

http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pgm_earlyed/pubs/vels_03.pdf