Washington Central Unified Union School District

WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity and power to contribute to their local and global communities.

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Steven Dellinger-Pate
Superintendent

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Board of Directors

FROM: The Pre-K Committee: Steven Dellinger-Pate, Superintendent; Diane Nichols-Fleming, Board Member; Celia Guggemos, Principal; Heather Clark Warner, Callie Weller, Katie Walczak, Pre-K Educators; Dawn Dumas, Early Childhood Special Educator; Rebecca Webb, Regional Act 166 Coordinator

DATE: October 15, 2025

SUBJECT: Program Recommendations for Universal Prekindergarten

This memo outlines the recommended structure and components for establishing a robust Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) program, designed to provide high quality, developmentally appropriate early learning experiences for children in the district.

Core Program Recommendations:

1. **High-Quality Education:** The program will offer Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Education Monday through Friday, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. This schedule provides 25 hours per week for 35 weeks annually, significantly exceeding the state's minimum requirement of ten hours per week.
2. **Educational Philosophy:** The program will be play-based and utilize the Responsive Classroom approach, prioritizing social-emotional learning. Curriculum will align with Vermont's Early Learning Standards. We are committed to full inclusion; ensuring children with disabilities receive individualized support alongside their peers.
3. **Program Scope:** Five classrooms will be established. Each classroom will serve a minimum of 8 students and a maximum of 20 students.

Enrollment and Eligibility

- **Eligibility:**
  - Any student currently enrolled in a WCUUSD Pre-K program, who is not entering kindergarten, is guaranteed a spot within the district program.
  - Students who are qualified under Early Childhood Special Education.
  - WCUUSD students turning 4 before Sept. 1.
  - WCUUSD students turning 3 before Sept. 1.

    - Non-WCUUSD residents after a set date.
    - Current language on Pre-K info page: Returning students are offered a placement first. Placement priority is then given to incoming 4-year-olds who have registered by March 28 in order of registration date. All other Pre-K placements are first come first served, and our programs have limited space.
- **Enrollment Process:** Families must enroll their child with their school district of residence. The district will establish clear enrollment procedures and notify parents of their right to publicly funded UPK.
- **Location Choice:** Families can sign up for Pre-K and rank their preferred location choice. Priority will be given to residents of the town in which the program is located, and to residents of a district town without a program.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Enrollment will not be denied based on race, creed, color, national origin, religion, disability, gender, parents' marital status, gender identification, or toileting status.
- **ECSE Services:** A child receiving Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services may receive those services in our prequalified UPK program. The district administers ECSE services for eligible children aged 3 up to 6 years.

Staffing and Ratios

1. **Ratios and Class Size:** The programs will maintain a 1:10 staff-to-child ratio (in line with National Association for the Education of Young Children best practice and Vermont licensing standards) with a maximum class size of 20 children.
2. **Staff Qualifications:** We will employ UPK Certified Teachers and Early Childhood Special Educators. All staff will receive required orientation training and annual professional development focusing on child growth, safety, and curriculum.

Additional Services and Funding

1. **Extended Care:** We recommend offering additional optional programs outside of the publicly funded 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM window. These are fee-based services paid for by families including the possibility of before school care, extended day Pre-K care, after school care.
2. **Funding Transparency:** The direct costs of the core prekindergarten education program will be publicly funded by the district. Families will be responsible for any fees associated with services beyond the publicly funded 25 hours per week.

Operational Requirements

1. **Non-Discrimination:** Enrollment will not be denied based on race, creed, color, national origin, religion, disability, gender, parents' marital status, or gender identification.
2. **Facilities and Health:** Facilities must meet licensing requirements, including providing a pleasant, safe environment with adequate space (at least 35 square feet indoors per child, and 75 square feet outdoors per child). The program will follow federal guidelines for **nutrition** (Child and Adult Care Food Program) and have plans in place for emergency medical responses, such as Epi Pens.

Current and previous licensed spaces for Pre-K Education

School	Available Rooms	Capacity (Number of Students)	Bathroom Location
Berlin	2 Rooms	15 in each room	located in each room
Calais	2 Rooms	20 and 15	located in each room
EMES	2 Rooms	17 and 16	located in each room
Rumney	2 Rooms	20 in each	located in each room
Doty	1 Room	15	No Bathroom located in room

Board Action: Direction from the Board to include this as a part of budget development this year. Implementation of the program will depend on the final budget approval.