



Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children

Dear colleagues,

Much like summer flowers, great things are popping up all over:

1. Vermont passed a strong and comprehensive bill to transform early childhood education! There's a lot in the bill, so scroll down for key points, the link to the recent briefing for early childhood educators, and how it sets the foundation for advancing ECE as a profession.
2. VTAEYC and the CDD just announced we are administering the new System for Program Access to Resources for Quality Supports, or SPARQS. This is a long-term, responsive, wraparound system of resources to support high quality for all regulated programs in Vermont. SPARQS will provide consultation, coaching, mentoring, technical assistance support, and program quality assessments. For Vermont Early Childhood Networks, SPARQS will provide support and resources at the network level as well as for individual programs. We're ramping up for a summer launch - and soon, we'll start hiring! Follow us on [social media](#) and check vtaeyc.org for updates (and if you're reading this you probably already subscribe to our updates - but if not, [subscribe here!](#))
3. The Student Loan Repayment Assistance Program (SLRAP) for early childhood educators relaunches June 1 with expanded eligibility rules and funding. If you are a working early childhood educator with student loan debt, [check your eligibility](#). If you're newly eligible under the expanded criteria, you could receive one retroactive payment.
4. We are now accepting nominations for our prestigious annual awards: Children's Champion, Distinguished Service, Outstanding Member, ECE Student of the Year, and Early Childhood Educator of the Year! Think about the stars in your ECE galaxy, and nominate them.

We've needed relief for so long, and it feels wonderful to share so many opportunities for support and recognition with you.



When you think about what you need, dream big. Don't hold back. SPARQS, SLRAP, and the funding in the bill now on the Governor's desk are all designed to be responsive to your needs, and here for the long term.

My best,

Sharron Harrington
Executive Director

New, expanded eligibility for Student Loan Repayment Assistance Program for ECEs

On June 1, Vermont's Student Loan Repayment Assistance Program for Early Childhood Educators relaunched with new, expanded eligibility criteria.

New eligibility rules now include debt incurred for:

- ✓ Master's degrees
- ✓ Degrees with graduation dates more than five years ago
- ✓ Non-ECE degrees, as long as you have a certain number of ECE related credits, equivalent to a Level IIIB or higher on the Northern Lights Career Ladder

Plus, if you had debt in 2022-23 that was ineligible under the old criteria, but matches the new criteria, you may also be eligible for a retroactive payment of up to \$4,000.

All details and application: vtaeyc.org/slraps



🌟 Announcing SPARQS: System for Program Access to Resources for Quality Supports

SPARQS is a new, simpler, streamlined system to improve and reward quality in Vermont's regulated programs. It's built to respond to your needs. And it's built to last.

In partnership with the CDD and Vermont Afterschool, VTAEYC is excited to administer this wraparound system of resources. SPARQS will provide consultation, coaching, mentoring, technical assistance support, and program quality assessments. For Vermont Early Childhood Networks, SPARQS will provide support and resources at the network level as well as for individual programs.

Right now, VTAEYC is hiring staff and ramping up our internal resources to support program rollout this summer.

- 🌟 Read [Sharron's SPARQS announcement here](#)
- 🌟 Want to receive SPARQS-specific updates from VTAEYC? [Edit your preferences here.](#)

Nominations open for VTAEYC awards!

Each year, VTAEYC honors exceptional early childhood educators and allied professionals for their commitment. VTAEYC seeks nominations for the following awards:

- 🌟 Children's Champion
- 🌟 Distinguished Service to Children
- 🌟 Emerging Leader
- 🌟 Outstanding Member
- 🌟 Vermont ECE Student of the Year
- 🌟 Early Childhood Educator of the Year

For most awards, you must be a VTAEYC+NAEYC member to submit a nomination.

All details at vtaeyc.org/annual-awards.

Pictured: 2022 Distinguished Service Award winner Jackie Sprague with Sharron Harrington



What's in the "Child Care Bill" passed by the legislature? How does it connect to the future ECE profession?

The legislature passed a historic bill to transform early childhood education in Vermont, shaped significantly by the advocacy and testimony of so many dedicated ECEs. Here are some of the big takeaways:

- \$125M in annual investment
- CCFAP reimbursement shifts to enrollment, not attendance
- CCFAP reimbursement increases this summer to 5-star reimbursement for all programs, with another 35% increase in January
- \$20M in readiness grants starting this summer
- Movement toward minimum compensation scale
- Indefinite extension/expansion of the Student Loan Repayment Assistance Program

How does the bill support the future ECE profession?

Compensation: The public investment is intended to build on CCFAP funding infrastructure so programs can commit to meeting minimum compensation standards -- and have the reliable funding to meet those commitments. The legislature intends for a minimum compensation scale to take effect when we reach the point of reimbursement rates being based on the true cost of care.

Mixed-delivery: There is no change to UPK in this bill: instead, a committee will study delivery and access expansion. VTAEYC is identified as a participant in the UPK study committee. Any changes to the current UPK design would come no earlier than 2026, after the study is completed and future legislation passes.

Want to know more? [Check out these FAQs from Let's Grow Kids.](#)

Self-nominate for the Advancing as a Profession Task Force!

The Task Force for Advancing ECE as a Profession in Vermont is made up of working early childhood educators who represent Vermont's diverse ECE settings, roles, and locations. As we begin building the bridge to the new profession, we seek a few new members.

Interested in joining us? [Learn more and nominate yourself here](#)
Learn more about [Advancing ECE as a Profession](#)

Exchange Fellow Naomi Alfini featured in KidsVT

In the latest issue of KidsVT: Read **Naomi Alfini's** powerful personal essay about learning to manage climate anxiety, adapted from her research as a VTAEYC Exchange Fellow.

- Read Naomi's [essay in KidsVT](#)
- Read Naomi's [Exchange post about climate anxiety](#)
- Learn more about the [VTAEYC Exchange](#)



VTAEYC Board Member Stephanie Muñoz Wells honored as Emerging Leader

Congratulations to ECE leader and VTAEYC Board member **Stephanie Muñoz Wells**, who was honored as an emerging leader at the Southern Vermont Economy Summit!

"Stephanie Muñoz Wells, an early childhood educator at Northshire Day School, was among those community leaders recognized for their professional accomplishments and commitment to serving the region. Muñoz Wells serves as the chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee at Northshire Day School and as a member of the board of directors for the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children. "

[Read the full story in the *Manchester Journal*.](#)



Submit Annual Conference workshop proposals by June 9

Last call for Annual Conference workshops that promote hands-on, creative, joyful learning!

Learn more about the [Annual Conference](#) and [submit your workshop proposal](#)



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