**Summary of the Statewide Validation of the Guiding Principles**

**Findings, Feedback, and How Comments Have Been Addressed[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Who Participated and What Did They Say?**

* **A total of 110 individuals participated in the online review of the draft Guiding Principles.** These included family members, program administrators, teachers, professional organization staff members, consultants/trainers, early interventionists, state agency leaders, higher education faculty members, early childhood national project directors, therapists, health and mental health professionals, and students.
* **The overall response to the Guiding Principles was positive.**

1. 91% endorsed the principles as written
2. 88% agreed that it was a useful or somewhat useful document
3. 89% agreed that it was high quality or somewhat high quality.

**Overall the majority of these comments had positive things to say in support of the GPs**. Here are examples of the comments that were received from 85 individuals.

* “I got goose bumps reading this. What a world it would be for Vermont's families and children if we were given the resources to actually uphold our principles!”
* “As a Head Start home visitor for 25 years, I am excited to participate in a process that helps Vermont's young children and their families to receive and experience quality educational and family support services. Defining standards across multidisciplinary providers will ensure best practice and get us all ‘on the same page.’”
* “The language of this document is broad enough to cross professional boundaries, yet specific enough to inspire guidelines for quality in health care settings.”
* “My favorite is.. Promote understanding of the importance of inclusive and effective early childhood opportunities, supports, and services.”
* “Great to see culture, language, communication, and family participation included in this document.”
* This is a wonderful resource that can be used to help focus and unify people working in a variety of roles (e.g. families, teachers, personnel preparation faculty, related service providers) around what we want for all of Vermont's children and families.
* There were 31 people who responded to the survey but did not offer comments. **Of those, 30 endorsed the principles.**

**Suggestions from the Field and Corresponding Revisions**

Wording Suggestions Revisions

A number of comments reflected the need for edits or requested changes to the document. These were addressed by a small writing team that included family, state agency, higher education, professional organization, and practitioner perspectives. The writing team met, achieved consensus on each suggestion, and revised the draft accordingly. A summary of the comments and how they were addressed appears below.

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| **Wording Suggestions** | **Revisions** |
| Include emphasis on **mental health** | The phrase *mental health* was added to the second paragraph of the introduction |
| Replace the word “partners” to acknowledge that families are the **experts** when it comes to their children | The fourth bullet now reads *For each and every family, we will respect and support them as* ***experts****, partners, and decision makers in the learning and development of their child* |
| Specify the **age range** addressed in the Guiding Principles | The phrase *birth through Grade 3* was added to the first paragraph for clarification. |
| Some respondents requested that the Guiding Principles stress **evidence-based practices** while others requested the term **research-based practices** | Each of these terms is preferred by one of the state agencies supporting young children and families. Both terms now appear in the Guiding Principles. Bullet 13 mentions the need to *draw upon evidence and research for practices*. |
| Include emphasis on **sexual orientation** | This phrase was added to bullet 9, which now speaks to *differences such as race, class, gender, family structure, ability, and sexual orientation*. |

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| **Conceptual Suggestions** | **Revisions** |
| Define “we” in the phrases “We believe that each and every child” and “we will” | “We” is partially defined in the second paragraph as *individuals, organizations, and communities*  “We” was further defined as “individuals who work with, advocate for, or care about young children.” |
| Revise the document to simplify the vocabulary and lower the reading level | To avoid losing the richness and specificity of the words, and to honor the high level of endorsement for the language of the draft, the document will retain the original vocabulary. Instead, multiple versions of the Guiding Principles in Action will be created for specific for specific audiences (i.e. families, teachers, admini-strators, policy makers, funders, professional organi-zations, etc.) |
| Increase emphasis on **community supports** | Paragraph two of the introduction reiterates that the Guiding Principles *highlight explicit, intentional, and strengths-based practices that are respectful of and responsive to child, family, and community values, priorities, and beliefs*.  Bullet 11 now reads *Provide options, flexibility, and continuity within each community by working collaboratively within and across agencies, programs, and funding sources* |
| Address the forms in which **bias** occurs (individual, systems) | Bullet 9 now reads *Acknowledge and address biases in ourselves and others* |
| Don’t settle for small improve-ments. Use the Guiding Principles to identify the qualities Vermont aspires to for young children and families | Bullet 12 was strengthened to *expand the number of early childhood* *professionals who are well prepared, reflect the diversity of the community, and are appropriately compensated* |
| Speak specifically to the priority for equity in Vermont’s early childhood systems | Bullet 8 was added to underscore the need to *build equitable access to opportunities, supports, and services* |

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| **Formatting Suggestions** | **Revisions** |
| Add photos to the document | * To keep the length of the Guiding Principles succinct, photos will not be added to this initial version. * Photos will be added to audience-specific versions mentioned above (The Guiding Principles in Action) |

Once these edits were incorporated, several addition steps were taken.

* The entire document was checked for strong verbs at the beginning of each statement, for consistent use of the oxford comma, for subject-verb agreement, and for active voice.
* The Guiding Principles were shuffled into an order that made the most sense. This included merging and splitting some principles.
* The document was reviewed for cohesion with the Vermont Family Stories, Early Childhood Framework, and Early Childhood Action Plan.

A number of respondents asked about how the Guiding Principles will be used. Yet others asked about assurances that individuals and organizations would implement them. Along with the development and validation of the Guiding Principles, efforts are already underway to guarantee that this resource is well and widely used. These include:

* Development of an implementation process for the installation, implementation, and sustainability of the Guiding Principles
* Development of a communication plan to share information about and build commitment to the use of the Guiding Principles
* Establish an electronic “landing pad” to make the Guiding Principles and related resources accessible in multiple formats and languages

1. Beth Peloquin compiled all the survey results. Comments were shared with a writing group who collectively addressed options for thoughtfully responding to the input. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)