



# Seattle Preschool Program

Voluntary, high-quality, affordable

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Parent Questions

#### **How can I enroll my child in the Seattle Preschool Program?**

*The Seattle Preschool Program will be completely voluntary to families and providers.*

*The Seattle Preschool program will start enrolling children in the 2015-16 school year. Prior to that, the City will publicize the program to the city's families with young children. Details of enrollment and selection will be outlined in the Implementation Plan.*

#### **I want to participate in the Seattle Preschool Program, but I only want a half-day preschool program?**

*The Seattle Preschool Program will only be contracting with preschools willing to offer full-day (6-hour) class days. Current early learning research demonstrates that children benefit from a full class day.*

#### **How much will this program cost?**

*The Mayor's Action Plan for the Seattle Preschool Program proposed a sliding-scale for tuition based on your family's income. If approved, families who earn up to 200% of Federal Poverty Level (\$47,700 for a family of four) the program will be free. For families up to 600% of Federal Poverty Level (\$143,100 for a family of four), the program will cost no more than 40% of the cost. Higher Income Families will pay a greater share.*

#### **If my preschool joins the Seattle Preschool Program, will my child be admitted to the Seattle Preschool Program?**

*Yes, if your preschool becomes a Seattle Preschool Program, your child, if eligible, will be given priority in enrollment.*

### Community Questions

#### **In the final phase of this program, how many children will be served?**

*In the final year of this program 2,000 children will be served. Cumulatively over the four-year demonstration, a total of 3,650 children will be served.*

#### **How was this plan developed?**

*Initially, the City Council asked the Office for Education to work to develop a universal preschool plan. The Council was inspired by the research about how quality preschool can close the achievement gap, and provide children an opportunity to excel in school and life. The Office for Education contracted with*

*BERK Consulting to develop the Preschool Action Plan. BERK worked with national preschool experts, Ellen Frede and Steven Barnett, and local experts, John Bancroft and Tracy Yee, to develop a set of recommendations for the City of Seattle. Additionally, the Office for Education convened six workgroup to provide the consulting group with information about Seattle's current early learning context. Together with community feedback, BERK presented to the City Council a robust set of recommendations for how to provide quality early learning services to Seattle's children. From there the Mayor developed an Action Plan that would work within our budgetary parameters while also holding to our primary goal, Quality before Quantity.*

### **Why are certain program elements like dosage, curriculum, and teacher qualifications important to the quality of a preschool?**

*The Seattle Preschool Program Action Plan is developed from current research in early learning about what supports the social-emotional and academic development of children. Currently there is research to support that a full-time, 6-hour class day, an evidenced-based curriculum, and teachers with high educational qualifications can positively benefit children's early development. The ultimate goal of the Seattle Preschool Program is to narrow, and potentially eliminate, the opportunity and preparedness gap young children face, and these quality elements are important in helping us meet this goal.*

### **How will teachers be supported in the Seattle Preschool Program?**

*The Seattle Preschool Program will support its teaching staff in a variety of ways. Teachers will be supported to meet degree requirements through tuition assistance programs and academic advising support. Additionally we will partner with higher education institutions to encourage programs to be more accessible, culturally appropriate, and more supportive to the early childhood education workforce. Teachers will be coached and mentored regularly; coaches will allow teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and further develop their skills. Teachers will participate in comprehensive curriculum training, in addition to various ongoing professional development designed to improve their teaching skills. Teachers who meet degree, certificate, and experience requirements will be paid on par with public school teachers.*

### **Public schools are increasingly crowded. Will the Seattle Preschool Program put even more pressure on Seattle Public Schools facilities?**

*The Seattle Preschool Program will partner with BOTH community-based preschool providers and the Seattle School District. Existing preschool programs will be prioritized for expansion. The program has an intentional and practical timeline to ensure that we are able to grow at a rate that acknowledges the limitations that we face in facilities. Additionally we have set aside \$8.5 million over four years to help providers renovate and build new facilities as we look to expand access across the city.*

### **Why does the Seattle Preschool Program use a sliding pay scale?**

*Since the Seattle Preschool Program will be levy-funded, the sliding scale provides a consistent source of revenue for the program while allowing the Seattle Preschool Program to increase access to high-quality preschool to the children of Seattle. All families will be subsidized, and low- and middle-income families will receive a substantial subsidy.*

### **Will this program be offered only in the public schools?**

*No, the Seattle Preschool Program will operate under a mixed-delivery model. The City will contract with both public schools as well as community-based preschools. Additionally the City will develop a pilot to test the feasibility of extending this program into Family Childcare settings.*

### **Will this be an extension of elementary school?**

*No, the Seattle Preschool Program will exist in a variety of settings, not just public schools. Also the Seattle Preschool Program will be play-based and developmentally appropriate.*

### **What is the need for additional preschool programs in Seattle?**

*Currently, many of Seattle's preschoolers do not have access to full-time preschool. Many low- and middle- income children don't have access to any type of preschool. Currently, we know that 63%-73% of 3- and 4- year-olds are in some form of care, but the quality of that care is not known. We also know that 60% of Washington kindergartners are scoring below expectations on kindergarten readiness assessments. Additionally, many families find quality preschool cost prohibitive. For these reasons, the Seattle Preschool Program seeks to expand access to quality preschool in Seattle.*

### **What will happen to existing publicly funded preschools (such as Head Start, ECEAP, and Step Ahead programs)?**

*Currently, around 50% of low-income children do not have access to preschool. Head Start, ECEAP, and Step Ahead do not have space to serve all of Seattle's low-income children. The Seattle Preschool Program will encourage these publicly funded preschool to join the Seattle preschool programs in order to expand high- quality preschool services to low-income communities.*

### **Should the Seattle Preschool Program focus on low-income preschoolers?**

*Research shows that children benefit the most from preschool when the classroom is comprised of mixed-income peers. While low-income children benefit the most from these services, it is important that full-time, quality preschool be accessible to middle-income and high-income families as well. Current research shows that middle-income families often have the lowest access to quality preschool programs; we would like to ensure that ALL children have equal opportunity to be school-ready.*

### **How much will this program cost the taxpayers?**

*The program will potentially be funded through a property tax-levy. The cost will be **\$43.36 a year or \$3.61 a month** to the average homeowner in Seattle.*

**Who will run this program? And who will evaluate its effectiveness?**

*The City's Office for Education will serve as the administrators of this program. They will be contracting with an outside evaluation agency to assess the effectiveness of the program and its processes. This assessment will be presented to the Mayor, City Council, and the public.*

**The Seattle Preschool Program will serve a limited number of children; how will you decide who gets in?**

*The City's roll-out strategy will prioritize areas of the city with low scores on achievement tests, high concentrations of low-income families, English Language Learners, and incoming kindergartners. The City will be designing a student enrollment process that will prioritize mixed-income classrooms, mixed-age classrooms, and classrooms comprised of students who live near available Seattle Preschool Program providers.*

**Preschool Providers**

**Will all preschools in Seattle become Seattle Preschool Program schools?**

*No, this program will be completely voluntary to families and providers.*

**If my preschool accepts City of Seattle or DSHS subsidies, will it become a Seattle Preschool Program school?**

*All participation in the Seattle Preschool Program is voluntary.*

**I want to participate in Seattle Preschool Program, but my program is half-day preschool program. Is that possible?**

*The Seattle Preschool Program will only be contracting with preschools willing to offer full day (6-hour) class days. Current early learning research demonstrates that children benefit from a full class day.*

**How will the Seattle Preschool Program impact existing preschool programs?**

*The City of Seattle is taking a Quality before Quantity approach that will slowly ramp up over four years to serve 2,000 children by 2018-19. There are over 12,000 3- and 4-year-olds in Seattle, so we do not anticipate that existing programs will see a reduction in their enrollment. Additionally, other states and cities that have developed a universal preschool program have seen a rise in demand for all preschool programs.*

**If I want to participate in the Seattle Preschool Program, how much funding will I receive for each preschooler?**

*Many details of the plan will be provided within the Implementation Plan, but currently providers will be reimbursed at the rate of approximately \$10,700/child/year. Additional funding will support services provided to preschools, such as coaching, professional development, mental health support, etc.*

**What classroom models or curricula will the Seattle Preschool Program support? Will the use of these models and curricula be required?**

*The Seattle Preschool Program is intent on ensuring that young children are socially and academically ready for school and life. Evidence shows that these goals can be best accomplished by using a curriculum that is research-based. The Seattle Preschool Program will require that classroom adopt an approved research-based curriculum, and training and support for that curriculum will be provided. Specific curricula and classroom models will be decided on during the implementation planning process.*

**Will unlicensed preschools be able to participate in the Seattle Preschool Program?**

*Seattle Preschool Program providers will need to be licensed with the State of Washington's Department of Early Learning (with an exception for government agencies or public schools).*

**How will student outcomes be assessed in the Seattle Preschool Program?**

*During implementation planning, assessments to measure student outcomes will be selected for providers who wish to operate Seattle Preschool Program classrooms. Currently we know that teachers and directors will have to meet educational requirements, the program must adopt an approved curriculum, participate in ongoing professional development, screen students for developmental concerns, operate for 6 hours/day and 5 days/week, offer family engagement activities, and be able to demonstrate their quality through Early Achievers, CLASS, and ECERS. These standards will be in place to ensure that programs are providing high-quality preschool classroom that will benefit the child's academic and social emotional future.*

**What education requirements will teachers need to meet? If my teachers currently don't meet those requirements, can my program still participate?**

*You can still apply to provide Seattle Preschool Program classrooms but you will need to have your teachers enroll in the appropriate coursework to meet the education requirements. Your teachers will have four years to meet these requirements and can access the Seattle Preschool Program's capacity-building efforts for financial and administrative support.*