SEATTLE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
ACTION PLAN

A blueprint for narrowing the opportunity and achievement gap

City of Seattle
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“There is nothing more morally important that I will do as Mayor in the next four years than creating a high quality preschool program for three- and four-year-olds in Seattle.”

- Mayor Ed Murray
“A LARGE BODY OF SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE HAS SHOWN THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE BRAIN IS ESTABLISHED BEFORE A CHILD ENTERS KINDERGARTEN. THESE early years of a child’s life are an important window of opportunity for social and cognitive development.

The right environments, experiences, and investments in these years can produce a lifetime of benefits. Failure to adequately support young children combined with the adversity that all too many children face can lead to academic failure, troubled lives, low wages, and poor health in later years.

Families who wish to provide good early educational experiences for their children frequently find it difficult to do on their own. Quality preschool programs are expensive, and working parents that need long hours of child care may conclude that a good early education is out of reach. In Seattle, over a quarter of all 3- and 4-year-olds live in families with incomes below 200% of federal poverty level ($47,700 for a family of four in 2014). Families struggling to make ends meet may find they have limited child care options. …

The evidence of the importance of early education for brain development and lifetime success combined with the inadequate quality of much early care and education has inspired numerous public policy initiatives to support high-quality, universal preschool. Yet in most states the vast majority of 3- and 4-year-olds have no access to public preschool programs. Increasingly, local communities, including Boston, San Antonio, and Washington, D.C., have been unwilling to wait for state or federal government action and have moved ahead with their own programs.

On September 23, 2013, Seattle City Council joined these cities by unanimously passing...Resolution 31478, which endorsed voluntary, high-quality preschool for all 3- and 4-year-old children. … The ultimate goal of this program is to offer every family the opportunity to enroll their children in a preschool program that will provide strong support for each child’s learning and development in partnership with parents and caregivers. This will better prepare Seattle's children to succeed in school and enhance equal opportunity for later life success.”

BERK in partnership with Columbia City Consulting, Dr. Ellen Frede and Dr. W. Steven Barnett, Recommendations for Seattle’s Preschool for All Action Plan, 2014
Over the last decade, it has become clear that the education “gap” is about more than achievement on standardized tests. From the time children enter school, there is a “preparedness gap.” While some children have ample opportunities to develop school-ready social and pre-academic skills, many others do not. The education “gap” is about opportunity. In Seattle, it is our goal to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive in school and life.

On average, children from low-income families and children of color have fewer opportunities to become appropriately prepared for the social and academic challenges of the K-12 system than their peers. Due at least in part to this opportunity gap, in Seattle today, economic and racial disparities persist in third grade reading levels, fourth grade math levels, and high school graduation rates. According to former President of the American Educational Research Association, professor, and researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings, the “historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society have created an education debt”¹ — a debt formed by annually compounding disparities.

We must address these disparities now, for the sake of our children and our children’s children. Social justice cannot wait as more debt accrues. Now is the time to create opportunities for success. Now is the time to close the opportunity and preparedness gaps.

We now know that disparities linked to family income and race evident early in life can persist throughout a student’s academic career. Here in Washington, the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is used to gather information about children’s developing skills as they enter kindergarten.

Observations are completed in six domains: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and math. WaKIDS data show that of the over 38,000 children who were assessed in the 2013-14 school year, almost 60% of children entered kindergarten below expected levels in one or more of these domains and almost 29% were below expected levels in three or more domains. These deficits were more pronounced for children from low-income families than peers from higher-income families.

Until race and family income no longer predict aggregate school performance, investments must be made to

**THE SEATTLE CONTEXT**

AS A FINANCIAL INVESTMENT, THE RATE OF RETURN FOR FUNDING HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL IS ESTIMATED TO RANGE BETWEEN $3 TO $7 FOR EVERY $1 INVESTED.
ameliorate these inequities. Research shows that attending a high-quality preschool program can make a positive difference in a child’s life, irrespective of the child’s socioeconomic background, race, or gender. For this reason and others, the City of Seattle is dedicated to ensuring all children have high-quality early learning opportunities.

Over the last decade, it has become clear from both scientific and economic perspectives that investments in high-quality learning lead to better academic and life outcomes for children and families. High-quality early learning helps prepare children to enter school with the skills they need to succeed.

The High/Scope Perry Preschool longitudinal study documents better life outcomes for children who received one year of high-quality preschool education. Forty years after participation, benefits for participants have been shown to include higher incomes and educational attainment and lower rates of incarceration as compared with non-participating peers. James Heckman, Nobel laureate and economist at the University of Chicago writes:

“Longitudinal studies demonstrate substantial positive effects of early environmental enrichment on a range of cognitive and non-cognitive skills, schooling achievement, job performance and social behaviors, long after the interventions ended.”\(^2\) More recent independent studies have confirmed the tangible academic and social benefits of high-quality preschool implemented on a large scale in Boston, Tulsa, New Jersey, and other jurisdictions.

In addition to providing benefits for individuals and families, high-quality early childhood education programs have been shown to be profitable investments for society as a whole. As a financial investment, the rate of return for funding high-quality preschool is estimated to range between $3 and $7 for every $1 invested. The best current evidence suggests that for every dollar spent, the average impact on cognitive and achievement outcomes of quality preschool is larger than the average impact of other well-known educational interventions.\(^3\)

Over the last few years states and cities have begun to respond to these scientific and economic imperatives by focusing on early childhood education. States including New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Georgia and cities such as Boston and San Antonio are investing in preschool programs. Washington State has also invested in early learning by creating the Department of Early Learning and developing a Quality Rating and Improvement System, known as Early Achievers, to help early learning programs offer high-quality care by providing resources for preschool and child care providers to support children’s learning and development.

In Seattle, we have learned from many of these efforts. We are streamlining the City’s current early learning functions and investments into a single organizational unit. Over the past eight months we have developed a
proposal for the Seattle Preschool Program, focusing on evidence-based approaches to support beneficial outcomes for children, their families, and our city as a whole.

In support of this effort, we have relied on advice and planning support from numerous engaged community members and experts in the field. The City contracted with BERK, in partnership with noted local experts, John Bancroft and Tracey Yee, as well as national experts, Dr. Ellen Frede and Dr. W. Steven Barnett, to develop a set of research-based recommendations for Seattle’s Preschool Program.

Drafts of these recommendations were reviewed by eleven national and local experts in education. Over 100 representatives from Seattle’s early learning communities participated on six workgroups. Outreach meetings were held with over 60 community groups and attended by hundreds of Seattleites.

Feedback gathered through workgroups and outreach has been used by the consultants to contextualize their recommendations and will continue to inform the City throughout the implementation of the Seattle Preschool Program.

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MAYOR MURRAY’S PROPOSAL

With Seattle context in mind, Mayor Murray will transmit legislation to City Council proposing the following:

» A four-year, $58 million levy to fund a demonstration phase of the Seattle Preschool Program that will build toward serving 2,000 children in 100 classrooms by 2018.

» The cost will be $43.36 a year or $3.61 a month to the average homeowner in Seattle.

» The plan is anchored in evidence-based practice, acknowledging that program quality is vital to success.

» The program will be provided through a mixed-delivery system, with classrooms offered by Seattle Public Schools and community providers.

» The program will be voluntary for providers and participants.

» The program will have the ultimate goal of serving all eligible and interested 4-year-olds and all 3-year-olds from families making less than 300% of the federal poverty level in Seattle.

» Tuition will be free for children from families earning at or below 300% of the federal poverty level.

» Tuition will be on a sliding scale for families earning more than 300% of the federal poverty level with at least some level of subsidy for all families.

» The program establishes high standards for teacher education and training and fully supports teachers in attaining these standards through tuition assistance and embedded professional development.

» Staff compensation levels are designed to attract and retain well-prepared teachers and to provide fair compensation for a traditionally poorly compensated sector of our economy.

» The program creates a feedback loop to inform programmatic improvement through ongoing, independent evaluation.

This proposal is built on the high-quality parameters of the BERK Recommendations and those of City Council Resolution 31478. The implementation schedule is realistic, so that the necessary quality is truly achieved before the Seattle Preschool Program is expanded. Lessons learned through the four-year demonstration phase of the Seattle Preschool Program will guide our actions in coming years as we work toward achieving our goal of expanding access to affordable, high-quality preschool to Seattle’s three- and four-years-olds.

This Administration looks forward to working with partners across the educational continuum to collaborate in making other strategic, evidence-based investments to eradicate the opportunity, achievement, and preparedness gaps.
The plan is evidence-based. If implemented with fidelity, it will **narrow, even eliminate, the opportunity and preparedness gaps** and deliver significant academic gains for the children of Seattle.

The plan will demonstrate **meaningful collaboration and key partnerships** with Seattle Public Schools, the Washington State Department of Early Learning, community-based preschool providers, early childhood development providers, and other stakeholders to deliver an effective and coordinated program that leverages existing resources.

The plan includes a **realistic and practical timeline** to achieve and sustain high-quality preschool.
The program will be **affordable for low- and middle-income families**, ensuring that cost will not be a barrier to participation in high-quality preschool.

The plan calls for **ongoing monitoring and evaluation** to ensure we meet our school readiness, quality, and achievement goals.

The Seattle Preschool Program is **voluntary**. It is voluntary for families and it is voluntary for providers.
The plan provides for the **support and resources** to meet the high-quality standards and expectations of the program.

**CORE GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Competitive salaries for Seattle Preschool Program teachers
- Coaches and training for teachers and instructors
- Tuition support for education and certifications
- Range of pathways and portals for providers to access support and resources

Beyond classroom instruction, the initial phase **will include an additional set of policies, services, and program elements**, that may be modified or enhanced in future phases of the program.

**REFLECTED IN:**
- Setting a 15- to 20-year full implementation goal of serving 80% of all 4-year-olds and all 3-year-olds from families earning less than 300% of the federal poverty level in Seattle
- Use of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative toolkit and the provision of funding for consultant services to review workforce capacity, identify the needs of refugee and immigrant communities, and offer strategies to create pathways to high-quality early learning opportunities
- Screenings for developmental and behavioral concerns
- The provision and leveraging of mental health resources so that teachers can meet the needs of all children
The City of Seattle will build and manage a preschool program that utilizes a mixed-delivery approach. The City will contract with organizations that meet program standards and expectations, as outlined herein and in the Implementation Plan (which will be developed by the City of Seattle's Office for Education to detail the standards presented here). The City anticipates partnering with:

- Seattle Public Schools
- Community-based preschool providers
- Hub organizations that provide administrative support to a variety of cooperating providers

After initial program start-up, the City will work to develop a Family Child Care (FCC) Pilot to assess whether and how partnering with FCC providers can be implemented in a way that achieves, in a cost-effective manner, the same quality standards as other types of providers.

To be eligible to contract with the City to provide preschool through this program, qualified organizations will need to meet the following criteria:

- They must be licensed by the Washington State Department of Early Learning to provide preschool services (or exempt from licensing requirements by virtue of being a public school or institution of higher education).
- They must participate in the Early Achievers Program, hold a rating of Level 3 or above, and meet minimum requirements for the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) scores as determined through the Implementation Planning process.

In order to participate in the program, organizations must commit to:

- Providing two or more preschool classrooms
- Ensuring that all children in contracted classrooms are Seattle residents
- Adhering to the program standards listed herein
Contracting with Seattle Public Schools will be a priority. Additionally, priority will be given to qualified organizations meeting the standards listed herein that:

- Have the capacity to provide more preschool classrooms for the program.
- Make care available before and after preschool classroom hours, on holidays, and over the summer.
- Provide dual language programs.
- Have higher ratings in Early Achievers and higher scores in CLASS and ECERS-R.
- Are located in areas with the lowest academic achievement as reflected in 3rd grade reading and 4th grade math performance on Measures of Student Progress (MSP) or subsequently adopted assessments, as well as those with high concentrations of low-income households, English language learners, and incoming kindergartners.
- Provide preschool services through Head Start or Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).
- Have existing contracts with the City to provide preschool services.

Teacher-Student Ratio and Class Size

- The maximum class size is 20, with a ratio of 1 adult for every 10 children. In the average classroom, we anticipate one Lead Teacher and one Instructional Assistant.
- In classrooms where more than 6 of the students are considered to be members of a “special population” as defined in the Implementation Plan (for example, children in foster/kinship care or other areas of child welfare system, English language learners, children who receive special education services), additional instructional staff support will be provided for the classroom.
The program will be open to Seattle residents who:

- Are 4-years-old on August 31st prior to the beginning of a school year of enrollment, or
- Are 3-years-old on August 31st from families with income equal to 300% of Federal Poverty Level or below.

As the program is ramping up, priority will be given to:

- Children who are currently enrolled in preschool with a contracted organization.
- Children whose sibling is currently enrolled in the Seattle Preschool Program and would be concurrently enrolled with the sibling in the year of enrollment.
- Children living in close proximity to available program classrooms.
- Children who are 4-years-old relative to children who are 3-years-old, both during the initial enrollment process and when there is a wait list.

Dosage:
Classroom Hours

Preschool classes will operate on a full-day schedule. In a typical week, this will mean 5 days a week and 6 hours per day. Children will attend preschool 180 days per year.

Language Support

Dual language programs that meet the qualifications of the Seattle Preschool Program and are representative of Seattle's linguistic diversity will receive funding priority.

Bilingual lead teachers and instructional assistants who meet the competency criteria developed in the Implementation Plan will be fairly compensated for their expertise.

Students will be assessed in languages of instruction when feasible.
**PROGRAM STANDARDS**

### Curricula

Providers will be required to adopt the approved curricula as detailed in the Implementation Plan.

After 2018, a curriculum waiver process will be considered for high-quality providers.

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### Staff Education Requirements

All newly hired staff will be required to meet the following standards:

- **Director and/or Program Supervisor:** Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Education or a BA with college-level coursework in Early Childhood Education. Expertise or coursework in educational leadership and business management is also required.
- **Lead Teachers:** Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Education or a BA and a State Teaching Credential with a P-3 Endorsement.
- **Assistant Teachers:** Associate’s Degree in Early Childhood Education or two years of coursework in Early Childhood Education meeting Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Educational Professionals.
- **Coaches:** Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Education or a BA and a State Teaching Credential with a P-3 Endorsement. “Endorsements” in selected curricula are also required.

Current staff will be given 4 years to meet these requirements. The City will work with local colleges and universities to develop an alternate route program for teachers with Bachelor’s Degrees in fields other than Early Childhood Education. The City will also develop an alternative process through which experienced, high-quality lead teachers — as defined in the Implementation Plan — may be granted waivers.

Compensation will vary based on degree attainment, State certification status, and experience. Lead teachers who meet the education/certification requirements above will be paid on par with public school teachers.
PROGRAM STANDARDS

Staff Professional Development

The City’s professional development model is coaching intensive. Coaches who have been “certified” or “endorsed” in the selected curricula will provide:

- On-site curriculum support (reflective coaching) to teachers, center directors, and program supervisors.
- Off-site training.

Additionally, training will be provided in areas of need, likely including:

- Best practices in inclusion, bilingual education, cultural relevancy, and classroom management for Lead Teachers and Instructional Assistants.
- Best practices in reflective coaching, educational leadership, and business management for Directors and Program Supervisors.

Additionally, the City will coordinate with the Washington State Department of Early Learning to leverage professional development resources available to providers through the Early Achievers Program.

Developmentally Appropriate, Inclusive Support

The Seattle Preschool Program will have a “Zero Expulsion and Suspension Policy.” The Program will take an integrated approach to supporting children’s social and emotional growth by providing developmentally appropriate curriculum resources and professional development and coaching to all contracted organizations. Furthermore, the City will:

- Support screenings, such as: The Early Screening Inventory-Revised Version (ESI-R), the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), and/or the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social Emotional (ASQ-SE).
- Provide in-class support for teachers from coaches or mental health professionals as needed.
- Support teachers in effectively meeting the needs of all children, especially those who exhibit challenging behaviors.
- Work alongside Seattle Public Schools Special Education department to meet the needs of children with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs).
Family Engagement

The Seattle Preschool Program will:

- Prioritize a universal family engagement approach that integrates intentional parent/child activities and promotes academic, social, and emotional school readiness.
  
  » Families will be provided with evidence-based activities, which could include proven home-learning activities, tied to the chosen curriculum models.
  
  » Providers will host events throughout the school year to connect families to resources and information on topics such as child development and nutrition.

- Build on Early Achievers Strengthening Families framework to increase providers’ foundational knowledge about the importance of parents and families in children’s lives and the family’s impact on child outcomes.

- Create a family engagement grant fund that could be used by providers to design, develop, and provide family engagement activities.

Governance and Organizational Structure

The City of Seattle’s Office for Education, or successor city agency, will administer the program.

The City will establish a Preschool Levy Oversight Body, which will be an expansion of the current Families and Education Levy Oversight Committee, to make recommendations on the design and funding of the program and to monitor the progress of the program in meeting its outcomes and goals.
PROGRAM STANDARDS

Kindergarten Transitions

The City will work with the Washington State Department of Early Learning and Seattle Public Schools and execute written agreements to:

- Align practices, responsibilities, and timelines and to address data sharing, academic expectations, curriculum alignment, and professional development.
- Ensure that families are connected with available information and resources.

Capacity Building

The City of Seattle is committed to developing Seattle Preschool Program workforce and helping existing preschool providers meet the quality standards herein and in the Implementation Plan. To accomplish this, the City will:

- Provide funding for tuition assistance to program instructional and administrative staff to meet program standards.
- Fund facilities renovations, improvements, and start-up when needed.

Timeline, Ramp-Up and Cost

This Action Plan is for a 4-year demonstration phase of the Seattle Preschool Program. The City aims to serve over 2,000 of all eligible children by the 2018-2019 school year.

The Seattle Preschool Program will be submitted as an ordinance, pending the concurrence of City Council. A special election will be held in conjunction with the state general election on November 4, 2014 for the purpose of approving a four-year property tax levy. The net cost to the City is projected to be approximately $58,000,000. The average per child reimbursement to providers is projected to be approximately $10,700.
Outcomes and Evaluations

The City of Seattle’s Office for Education, or successor city agency, in partnership with independent experts in early learning and evaluation, will develop a Comprehensive Evaluation Strategy (CES) based on the recommendations for quality assurance and program evaluation provided by BERK. The CES will outline an approach to and timeline for conducting and reporting both process and efficacy evaluations.

The process evaluation will assess the City’s administration and oversight of the Seattle Preschool Program, the quality of providers contracted to provide preschool in the Seattle Preschool Program, and the fidelity of the implementation of program standards outlined herein and in the Implementation Plan. The efficacy evaluation will provide valid estimates of the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goal of improving children’s preparedness for kindergarten with sufficient precision to guide decisions about the program. Toward this end, the CES will define key research questions, outline an approach to data collection and analysis, and create a timeline for reporting the results of evaluations to the Mayor, City Council, the Levy Oversight Committee, and the public. All evaluations will be conducted by independent, external experts in early learning and evaluation.
This plan and the Recommendations for Seattle’s Preschool for All Action Plan, a report commissioned by the City of Seattle and completed by BERK in partnership with Columbia City Consulting, Dr. Ellen Frede, and Dr. W. Steven Barnett will be transmitted to City Council in May 2014 in response to City Council Resolution 31478.

Two pieces of legislation are expected to result from this plan: a ballot measure ordinance and a resolution that would approve this Action Plan.

Pending City Council approval of the ballot measure ordinance, the City Clerk will file an ordinance with the Director of Elections of King County, Washington, as ex officio supervisor of elections, requesting that the Director of Elections call and conduct a special election in the City in conjunction with the state general election to be held on November 4, 2014, for the purpose of submitting to the qualified electors of the City the proposition set forth in the ordinance.

The City of Seattle’s Office for Education will develop an Implementation Plan that addresses all program standards outlined herein. The Implementation Plan will be included in an ordinance package to be approved by City Council by 2015.
## EXPENDITURES

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<th>Category</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019 (8 months)</th>
<th>Net Program Cost</th>
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**Total expenditures:** $5,274,179  $10,874,819  $17,449,950  $25,578,664  $20,544,891  $79,722,504

## REVENUES

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<td>Tuition</td>
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<td>$8,056,805</td>
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**Difference (Net Program Cost):**

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<td>$525,656</td>
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**TOTAL:** $4,761,696  $8,354,609  $12,515,602  $18,047,514  $14,355,310  $58,034,730

Actual revenues and expenditures may vary depending on factors such as enrollment and the sliding scale fee schedule.
1. A four-year levy would collect $58,034,730 over four years (2015-2018), with approximately $14.5 million collected annually. This budget represents how the funds collected will be invested over five calendar years (through the end of the 2018-19 school year). The 2019 budget represents eight months of expenditures (January through August 2019).

2. The 2015 budget assumes a full year of expenditures, including program ramp up costs in early 2015. The preschool program would begin at the start of the 2015-16 school year.

3. The budget assumes the following estimated number of children would be served through the 2018-19 school year:

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<td>259</td>
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<td>4-year-olds</td>
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<td>Classrooms</td>
<td>14</td>
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Notes
## SLIDING SCALE FEE SCHEDULE

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The Sliding Scale Fee Schedule illustrates the approximate annual tuition fees families will pay on a per child basis. The adopted fee schedule may be modified by ordinance to account for any changes in program costs and provider reimbursement rates.
Mayor Murray would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedicated planning that has gone into creating this Action Plan.

**Special thanks to:**

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- Tracey Yee, Columbia City Consulting

**Staff from:**

- Mayor’s Office, City of Seattle
- Seattle City Council, City of Seattle
- Office for Education, City of Seattle
- City Budget Office, City of Seattle
- Human Services Department, City of Seattle
- Public Health - Seattle & King County
- Seattle Public Schools
- Washington State Department of Early Learning

The City also extends its appreciation to the Seattle Early Education Collaborative and the Seattle early learning community for their continued support and cooperation.