

FAMILIES AND EDUCATION LEVY & SEATTLE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM LEVY

Author: Brian Goodnight

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INTRODUCTION

This topic paper provides an overview of the City's two education levies:

1. Families and Education Levy
2. Seattle Preschool Program Levy

The paper addresses the background and context for the creation of the levies, a summary of the types of services funded through the levies, as well as a description of the City's relationship with Seattle Public Schools.

1. FAMILIES AND EDUCATION LEVY

The table below provides a summary of the four Families and Education Levies that the City of Seattle has approved since 1990. A more detailed description of the levies follows the table.

Table 1: Families and Education Levies

Levy Year	Ordinance	Amount
1990	115289	\$69.2 million
1997	118557	\$69.0 million
2004	121529	\$116.8 million
2011	123567	\$231.6 million

History – Previous Levies

In early 1990, then-Mayor Norm Rice convened an education summit and planning effort to recognize the City's role in supporting students. Participants recommended services focusing on making children safe, healthy, and ready to learn. That fall, the Council approved [Ordinance 115289](#) submitting a ballot measure to Seattle voters "for the purpose of providing assistance to Seattle Public School students and their families for educational and developmental services, such as early childhood development, school-based student/family services, comprehensive student health services, and out-of-school youth activities." The seven-year, \$69.2 million levy, commonly known as the Families and Education Levy, was approved in November 1990 with support from 56% of the voters.

In 1997, the City and the voters renewed the support to students and families by approving a second seven-year, \$69 million levy. The Council passed [Ordinance 118557](#) submitting a new property tax measure to the ballot, and 61% of the voters approved the levy in September 1997. The 1997 levy continued funding several of the 1990 levy programs (including child care, family support workers and family centers), and expanded after-school programs for

elementary and middle school students, as well as teen health centers. Additionally, the 1997 levy provided a greater emphasis on supporting middle school students and committed to focus attention and resources on a smaller subset of schools with the weakest student outcomes.

During the final year of the 1997 levy, the City convened a citizen advisory committee to review the levy's strategies and services. The committee recommended deeper levy investments with a clearer goal of helping students succeed academically. In July 2004, the Council passed [Ordinance 121529](#) submitting a new seven-year, \$116.8 million levy to the voters, who approved of the measure in September 2004 with 62% supporting the increased amount. The 2004 ordinance stated that the levy's services should be "designed to help address the needs of Seattle's public school children and Seattle's youth and their families, with the intent of promoting learning, supporting academic achievement, and increasing access to services, and the administration of those services."

Current Levy

The current iteration of the Families and Education Levy was submitted to Seattle voters via Council [Ordinance 123567](#), and was approved by 64% of the voters in November 2011. This levy is substantially larger than the previous levies, totaling \$231.6 million over the seven-year period.

The increase was largely driven by the research and recommendations of a 24-member Levy Advisory Committee that was formed in 2010 to review the 2004 levy programs, education reform efforts, school district data, and research best-practices and evidence-based programs. (The full report of the Levy Advisory Committee can be found in [Clerk File 311309](#).) The ordinance references the committee's work and notes that it recommended that the levy "goals again be expanded and [levy] investments deepened because graduation from high school is no longer sufficient; post-secondary work is necessary in the current and future economy and students must graduate with the skills necessary to succeed in college or their chosen career path."

Section 2 of the ordinance also states that although Seattle Public Schools (School District) is directly responsible for providing a quality education for all students, "government, business, community and families should collaborate and together all can contribute to the academic success of Seattle's children." The priorities for levy funding established in the ordinance are:

1. Children at risk, including English Language Learners,
2. Children, birth to age 5, likely to attend low performing schools,
3. Students with the highest level of academic need,
4. Schools with the highest level of academic need,
5. Maximizing impact by funding a targeted number of schools and students,
6. Build on the success of previous investments, where possible,
7. Use evidence-based and/or promising practices to improve academic outcomes, and
8. Invest in family strengthening practices.

As defined in the levy's Implementation and Evaluation Plan, approved by [Ordinance 123834](#), levy proceeds are invested to achieve the following city-wide outcomes:

- Children will be ready for school,
- All students will achieve academically and the achievement gap will be reduced, and
- All students will graduate from school college/career ready.

Oversight and Partnerships

The 2011 levy is managed by the City's Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL), which was created in 2015, and is the successor to the Office for Education that oversaw previous instances of the levy. Consistent with earlier levies, the 2011 levy is also overseen by a Levy Oversight Committee (LOC). The LOC is charged with making recommendations on the design and funding of levy programs, and monitoring the progress of the programs in meeting the levy outcomes and goals. The LOC consists of 12 members, including: the Mayor, the Chair of the Council committee responsible for education issues, the Superintendent of the School District, a member of the School District Board, and eight members of the public with professional, personal, or research experience associated with the growth and development of children.

The City has also entered into a partnership agreement with the School District related to the levy and its investments, which was approved by the Council in [Resolution 31385](#). The agreement states that the City and School District share the goal of having students graduate from high school ready for college, career and life. Further, it states, "Our shared belief is that these goals can be achieved if the City and the [School] District sincerely collaborate, working together in good faith to align their programs, and to carry out the principles, roles and responsibilities outlined in this agreement to achieve the aforementioned results." Examples of the roles and responsibilities contained in the agreement include:

- Investing in programs that are intended to positively impact academic achievement for all students, while focusing on high-need students experiencing significant barriers to learning.
- Ensuring that school leadership is responsible for supporting investments with strong instructional practices.
- Committing to sharing data with sufficient content and frequency to verify progress toward results.
- Analyzing shared data and reporting results on a semi-annual basis.

Investments

In the 2014-2015 school year, the Families and Education Levy budget was approximately \$31 million. The next table shows the levy's investment areas and budget allocations.

Table 2: 2014-2015 Families and Education Levy Budget Plan

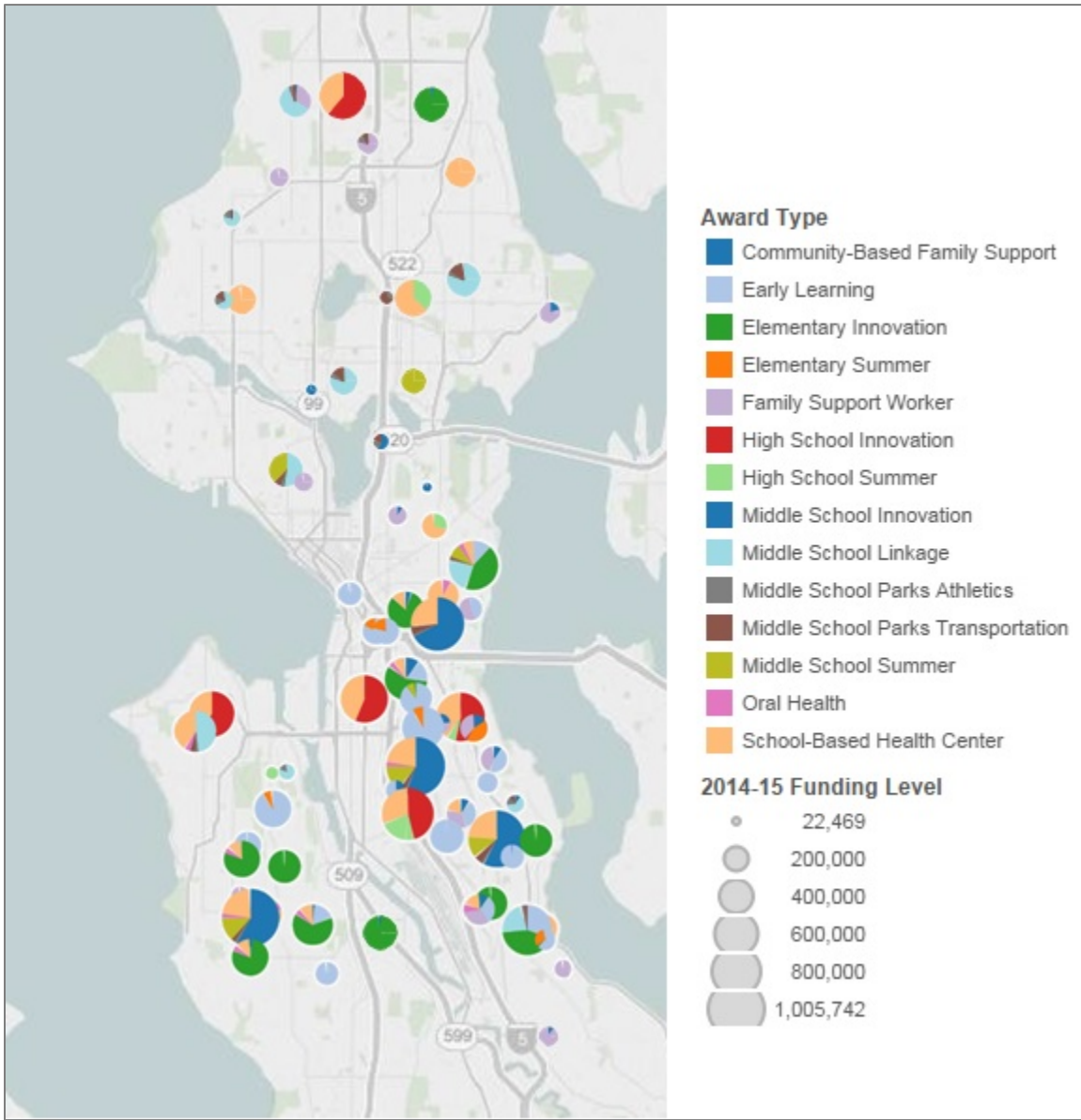
Investment Area	Amount (in millions)	% of Total
Administration	\$1.5	5%
Early Learning	\$7.8	25%
Elementary Schools	\$6.6	21%
Middle Schools	\$6.1	20%
High Schools	\$2.6	9%
Student Health	\$6.3	20%
Total:	\$30.9	100%

A few of the levy-supported programs are described below. For additional detail on these and other levy-supported programs, the [DEEL website](#) is a useful resource.

- Community-Based Family Support – focuses on closing the achievement gap for immigrant, refugee, and Native American elementary students by enabling schools and community-based organizations to provide case management support, increase connections between schools and families, ease transitions between schools, and ensure students have access to mental and physical health services.
- Early Learning Academy – provides professional development for preschool teachers, family child care providers, and caregivers to increase the number of children who enter kindergarten with the skills to succeed.
- School-Based Health Centers – available at most middle and high schools, the health centers are operated by community health agencies and provide sports physicals, preventative health care, immunizations, evaluation of common health problems, and counseling services.
- Summer Learning – provides extra time for students who are behind their peers with assistance in reading, language skills, and mathematics during the summer.

During a [mid-year report](#) to the Council in August 2015, DEEL presented the following map (Figure 1), showing the distribution of levy investments during the 2014-2015 school year.

Figure 1: 2014-2015 Levy Investment Distribution



The 2014-2015 school year represents the third year of the seven-year levy, and the spending plan calls for increased spending during each successive year. By the seventh year of the levy, DEEL estimates that the levy will expend approximately \$39.6 million on programs.

2. SEATTLE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM LEVY

Background

In September 2013, the Council passed [Resolution 31478](#) establishing the goal of making voluntary, high-quality preschool available and affordable to all children in the City of Seattle. The resolution also initiated a process to design the program and identify funding to reach this goal. The following May, the Executive submitted the Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) Action Plan to the Council, which established the broad policy framework for the program, including core guiding principles (e.g. the program will be affordable for low- and middle-income families) and high-level program standards (e.g., classrooms will operate 5 days a week and 6 hours per day).

In June 2014, the Council approved [Ordinance 124509](#) that performed a number of functions, such as: submitted a proposition to the voters for a \$58.3 million, four-year property tax levy to provide preschool services, established an oversight committee, endorsed priorities for levy funding, set minimum program requirements, and adopted the SPP Action Plan. In addition, the Council adopted [Resolution 31527](#) that amplified the policy framework in the SPP Action Plan, provided further direction regarding elements to be addressed in a future implementation plan, and laid out a set of principles with which the plan needs to be consistent.

During the general election in November 2014, voters approved of the Seattle Preschool Program Levy with 69% support. Subsequent to that approval, the Executive submitted two other plans to the Council that provide additional detail on the program's operations: the SPP Implementation Plan ([Ordinance 124749](#)) and the SPP Program Plan ([Clerk File 319422](#)).

School District Partnership

Similar to the arrangement established for the Families and Education Levy, the City and the School District have entered into a partnership agreement related to the Seattle Preschool Program, approved by Council [Resolution 31587](#) in June 2015. The agreement contains some high-level principles for the City and the School District's relationship as it pertains to SPP, such as: the City and the School District will work cooperatively to promote positive preschool-to-kindergarten transitions, the City and the School District will negotiate the School District's number of SPP classrooms on an annual basis, and, neither City nor School District funds will be used in ways that divert funds from their intended purposes.

The partnership agreement also describes the roles and responsibilities of the City and the School District. For example, the City will: reimburse the School District for costs associated with its administrative responsibilities for SPP, ensure that all proposed evaluations will only minimally disrupt students, and work with the School District to identify special education needs. With respect to the School District, it will: provide designated identification numbers to the City for assignment to preschool participants, adhere to all SPP quality requirements, and allow all instructional staff to participate in SPP professional development and coaching.

Current Status & Investments

The four-year levy is designed to fund the demonstration phase of the Seattle Preschool Program, which will build toward serving 2,000 children in 100 classrooms by the 2018-2019 school year. The long-term goal of the program is to serve all interested children in Seattle who are 4-years-old, or are 3-years-old from families making 300% or less of the federal poverty level.¹

The City is investing the levy proceeds to achieve the following city-wide outcomes:

- Children will be ready for school.
- All students will achieve developmentally-appropriate pre-academic skills.
- All students will develop both socially and emotionally.
- The readiness gap will be eliminated for SPP participants.

SPP is designed to support children’s growth in all developmental domains, including social and emotional health, physical development, cognitive skills, language, literacy and math. Some of the strategies that SPP is using to achieve the outcomes listed above are:

- Systematic Approach – High program eligibility standards to ensure that all participating provider agencies meet a baseline of quality and standards aligned with the Washington State Department of Early Learning’s Quality Rating and Improvement System, Early Achievers and licensing requirements.
- Class Size – Not to exceed 20 children; a ratio of at least one adult for every 10 children. In typical classrooms, this means one lead teacher and one assistant teacher.
- Curricula – Evidence-based curricula that provide frameworks for creating and nurturing constructivist and culturally responsive environments for children to learn and thrive.
- Access – Free tuition for families at or below 300% of the federal poverty level and a sliding scale tuition model for families above 300% of the federal poverty level; a minimal subsidy for all participants.

For the 2015-2016 school year, the City has enrolled 288 children in 15 classrooms, which exceeds the City’s targets for the first year. Table 3 provides a summary of the enrollment projections for SPP.

Table 3: Seattle Preschool Program Enrollment Projections

School Year	Children Served	Classrooms
2015-2016	280	14
2016-2017	780	39
2017-2018	1,400	70
2018-2019	2,000	100

¹ The federal poverty level varies by family size. For 2015, a family of four with a household income of \$72,750 earned 300% of the federal poverty.

In addition to the 15 classrooms that are operating during the 2015-2016 school year, the City has also enrolled a number of classrooms into the SPP Pathway program, which is an alternative program for preschool providers as they prepare to join SPP in subsequent years. During a recent [update to the Council](#), DEEL presented the following map showing the current distribution of preschool classrooms.

Figure 2: 2015-2016 SPP & SPP Pathway Classroom Sites



Note: Two SPP sites (Little Eagles and Hoa Mai) have more than one classroom.

For the 2015-2016 school year, the Seattle Preschool Program Levy budget is approximately \$10.5 million. Table 4 shows the high-level expenditure categories and offsetting outside revenues for the four school years funded by the levy.

Table 4: Seattle Preschool Program Levy Budget Plan (in millions)

Expenditure Category	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
School Readiness	\$4.2	\$8.4	\$14.8	\$20.3
Program Support	\$0.7	\$1.2	\$1.9	\$2.4
Capacity Building	\$3.1	\$2.7	\$2.9	\$2.9
Research & Evaluation	\$1.4	\$0.7	\$0.8	\$0.9
Administration	\$3.1	\$2.3	\$2.5	\$2.7
Contingency	\$0.3	\$0.3	\$0.5	\$0.6
Subtotal:	\$12.8	\$15.6	\$23.4	\$29.8

Offsetting Revenues	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Other Agency Funds for School Readiness	(\$1.9)	(\$3.2)	(\$4.9)	(\$6.3)
Tuition Revenues	(\$0.4)	(\$1.2)	(\$2.2)	(\$3.2)
Subtotal:	(\$2.3)	(\$4.4)	(\$7.1)	(\$9.5)

Total:	\$10.5	\$11.2	\$16.3	\$20.3
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As reflected in the budget plan above, the City is also undertaking an evaluation of the Seattle Preschool Program and its effectiveness during the demonstration phase. The Council approved a Comprehensive Evaluation Strategy for the program in August 2015 ([Ordinance 118461](#)) for DEEL staff and contracted evaluators to create or select evaluation tools, collect and analyze data, and identify course corrections as needed. By the final year of the demonstration phase, the City will know:

- If SPP has been rolled-out in accordance with its Implementation Plan.
- How best to support SPP providers to improve quality.
- How children who participate in SPP are performing compared to non-participants.
- How City processes can best support SPP and the community.
- How to incorporate high-quality Family Child Care providers into SPP.