

The Families and Education Levy Report to the Community February 2007

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LEVY'S OUTCOMES AND INVESTMENT AREAS

The Families and Education Levy is investing \$116 million over seven years in programs that improve the academic achievement of children and youth in Seattle. Seattle voters passed the Levy in September 2004. Implementation of programs funded through Levy investments began in September 2005.

This Families and Education Levy marks a major change from previous levy cycles. For the first time ever, the City established three overarching outcomes for programs receiving investments of Levy funds. These Levy outcomes are directly tied to success in school:

- School readiness
- Academic achievement and reduction of the achievement gap
- Reduced dropout rate and increased graduation rate

Funds from the Levy are managed by the City of Seattle's Office for Education (OFE). OFE partners with the Seattle Public Schools, the City's Human Services Department, Seattle Parks and Recreation Department and numerous community organizations to serve Seattle's children and youth in five broadly defined investment areas:

- Early Learning
- Family Support and Family-Community Partnerships
- Out-of-School Time and Middle School Support
- High-Risk Youth
- Student Health

FOCUSED ON RESULTS

Across the five investment areas, the Levy supports numerous programs, each of which works to achieve one or more of the three Levy outcomes. Each program sets performance targets representing a goal for the number of students who will be ready for kindergarten, achieve academically, stay in school or graduate.

Within each investment area, the Levy focuses on achieving the greatest possible results for students experiencing significant barriers to learning, in particular:

- Students of color
- Limited English speaking students
- Refugee/immigrant populations
- Students who are disproportionately achieving at lower levels

Tools used to measure achievement of Levy outcomes include the Speed DIAL kindergarten readiness assessment, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

SUCSESSES IN 2005-2006

The 2005-2006 school year marks the first full year of implementation for this Levy. The Levy is proud to report successes to the community, and eager to pursue the lessons learned that will lead to even greater results for children and youth in the coming years.

Across all five investment areas, Levy programs achieved the following successes in the 2005-2006 school year:

- 1,555 children and youth met one or more of the three Levy outcomes.
 - 77 children entered kindergarten ready to succeed.
 - 1,159 elementary through high school students achieved academically.
 - 319 middle and high school-aged students, who would have dropped out, stayed in school.

In addition:

- 4,900 middle and high school students accessed the Levy-supported School-Based Health Centers.
 - 2,360 received assistance managing chronic health conditions such as asthma or depression.
- 4,918 children and youth were immunized against disease.
- Twelve Step Ahead Preschools were established and professional development was provided; 74 teachers in 45 classrooms received training.

LESSONS LEARNED IN THE FIRST YEAR

- Almost all Levy programs met or exceeded the outcomes set in the first year, suggesting targets should be increased going forward.
- Achievement gaps are evident. While Levy programs served students who were struggling academically, particularly students of color and low-income students, the Levy may reduce the achievement gap further by focusing even more closely on these populations.
- Levy programs need to determine how often and for how long students should participate, and how this *dosage* impacts academic outcomes.

THE FIVE LEVY INVESTMENT AREAS: RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Early Learning

The Families and Education Levy is investing in Early Learning programs in order to prepare children for kindergarten. Early Learning programs provide services to young children from birth through age five, and their families. Each program has targets, which help measure success toward the Levy outcome of kindergarten readiness. Five Early Learning program areas are provided in southeast and southwest Seattle neighborhoods of low-income children and children of color:

- **Step Ahead Preschool Programs** serve low-income four-year-old children whose families earn between 110 percent and 300 percent of the federal poverty level. Levy funds support half-day Step Ahead programs in 12 locations throughout southeast and southwest Seattle. Step Ahead focuses on serving low-income children and children of color, including children who are African American, East African, Latino, Native American, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian and/or Samoan.
- **Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP)** serves enrolled low-income families with young children ages two and three in southeast and southwest Seattle neighborhoods. Based on a successful national

model, this program helps parents learn literacy skills to practice with their children and brings books and toys into families' homes.

- **Teacher Training** improves the skills of early learning teachers through professional development and mentoring. The teacher training focuses on serving children from birth to age three in southeast and southwest neighborhoods.
- **Kindergarten Transition** provides transition programs and resources for parents to help ensure success in kindergarten for children coming from home-based and community preschool programs.
- **Increased Compensation** for teachers in programs serving high numbers of low-income children to reduce turnover and reward them as they build their skills.

Early Learning Challenges and Lessons Learned

In 2005-2006, the Early Learning investment area—particularly the Step Ahead preschools—tackled many start-up challenges including low enrollment and low attendance from among neighborhood children, and logistical hurdles in setting up classrooms. Start-up challenges also hindered assessment of kindergarten readiness in the first year. Only 54 percent of children were assessed—not a representative sample.

By the end of the first year, the Early Learning team identified key lessons and questions to guide the work in Early Learning going forward, including:

- The Early Learning team and the Levy must determine the correlation between the time children spend engaged in programs and kindergarten readiness outcomes (*dosage*).
- OFE and the Seattle Public Schools must agree on a district-wide kindergarten readiness assessment and implement it for all Step Ahead children.

Early Learning Successes in 2005-2006

There were many successes in the first year of implementation in Early Learning:

- Classroom and teacher quality improved for all Step Ahead preschools in the first year, and 10 of the 15 classrooms exceeded the Levy target for classroom quality by spring 2006.
- Although not a representative sample, 91 percent of the children assessed met the kindergarten readiness standard.
- All 96 families in the Parent-Child Home Program received the target number of home visits.

Family Support and Family-Community Partnerships

The Families and Education Levy invests in two programs within this investment area:

- **Family Support** is a school-based program to help elementary school children succeed academically by providing resources to help families overcome barriers to social, emotional and physical well being. Levy funds are invested in Family Support Workers in elementary and K-8 schools to link students and their families with resources—including local business, social services and community members—that support students' academic achievement.
- The **Family-Community Partnerships** program strengthens the capacity of schools to partner with families and communities. Levy funds are granted to elementary schools and community-based

organizations to work together to support family involvement to increase academic achievement. Ten Seattle elementary schools and five community-based organizations have received grants to reach out to diverse families and involve them more fully in the education of their children.

Family Support and Family-Community Partnerships Challenges and Lessons Learned

The Family Support and Family-Community Partnerships teams identified key lessons that are shaping their work and strengthening their ability to contribute to academic achievement results for the low-income children and children of color served by these important programs:

- Family Support and Family-Community Partnerships programs must work even more closely to identify and help children and families.
- Family Support workers need to focus more on students needing academic help.
- Both groups have the capacity to achieve academic outcomes for higher numbers of elementary school students.

Family Support and Family-Community Partnerships Successes in 2005-2006

- With 350 students achieving academically, the programs exceeded their combined academic target of 176 students by nearly 100 percent.
- Family Support workers are using a new case management approach to help children academically.

Out-of-School Time and Middle School Support

The Out-of-School Time and Middle School Support investment area encompasses afterschool programs for elementary students and both in-school and afterschool programs for middle schoolers. Collectively, these programs all work toward academic achievement targets. Programs serving middle school students work collaboratively under the umbrella of the Middle School Support Program (MSSP) to maintain a continuum of services to help the most academically challenged middle school students improve their academic achievement.

- **Elementary Community Learning Centers (CLCs)** The Levy invested in four elementary CLCs in the 2005-06 school year at Brighton, Cooper, Concord and Van Asselt Elementary Schools. CLCs provide a comprehensive set of services, activities and learning experiences that are culturally relevant and tailored to the needs of students and families. They include homework and tutoring support focused on math and literacy, English-as-a-Second-Language instruction, project-based learning and technology activities. CLC staff collaborate with school staff to maximize learning by connecting after-school activities to the material students are learning during the school day. Community Learning Centers engage families and provide resource and referral information as well as parent and family activities promoting academic achievement.
- **Middle School Support Program (MSSP)** The Levy investment in MSSP furthers students' academic achievement by supporting innovative strategies for student learning in middle schools. MSSP teams—which include principals, teachers, counselors, afterschool programs and community-based organizations—work together in all middle schools to improve the academic achievement of selected groups of students, identified as most in need at each school. Four SPS middle schools—Denny, Aki Kurose, Madison and Mercer—are designated as Innovation Sites and receive the largest Levy investment to make changes in building structures and schedules, student assessments, professional development and classroom practice that improve academic results for middle school students. MSSP

supports building leaders to be flexible and creative and, in classroom instruction, promotes innovations that are proven to further academic achievement.

- **Middle School Community Learning Centers, After School Activities Program and Middle School Athletics** These programs round out the investment in middle school students, connecting students' school day with afterschool, and supporting those students most in need to improve their academic achievement.

Out-of-School Time and Middle School Support Challenges and Lessons Learned

- While all programs met the targets, the overall numbers of students meeting targets were low. The City should examine more direct approaches to impact student achievement, particularly in math.
- As with other Levy programs, ideal *dosage*—the duration and frequency of students' involvement—must be understood and addressed going forward for Elementary and Middle School CLCs and afterschool programs.
- The achievement gap among middle school students is wide, particularly in math.

Out-of-School Time and Middle School Successes in 2005-2006

- With 76 students meeting the WASL or DRA standard, Elementary CLCs exceeded the academic achievement target of 14 students by more than four times.
- Student Learning Plans (SLP) were developed for all targeted students in MSSP and the goals of each SLP were pursued collaboratively by all involved in each student's academic success: school-based teams, families and the students themselves.
- The Middle School Support Program exceeded its academic achievement target of 84 students by 163 percent, with 221 students meeting the WASL standard in reading and math. This includes students who also participated in middle school CLCs.

High-Risk Youth

Levy funds are invested in Seattle Team for Youth (STFY) which provides intensive case management services to return high-risk middle and high school youth to school, keep them in school, help them return to school, and help them graduate. STFY partners with community-based organizations for culturally appropriate services to ensure academic achievement. Case managers access ethnic and linguistic resources unavailable in most schools and help youth navigate school and court systems and access tutoring, mentoring, health, mental health, employment, and drug and alcohol treatment.

High-Risk Youth Challenges and Lessons Learned

- The number of students who stayed in school or returned to school was significantly greater than the number who achieved academically.
- Most of the students who were helped academically were in middle school, suggesting it is difficult to help high school students achieve in school with this program.

High-Risk Youth Successes in 2005-2006

- Although STFY fell short of its enrollment target, it came close to meeting its target for keeping students in school or returning them to school. Out of 479 students served, 319 stayed in school or returned to school—close to the target of 365.
- In response to the need, STFY will hire a case manager in 2007 to serve East African youth.

Student Health

Levy funds support both academic and health-related targets through two types of investments in student health services for middle and high school students.

- **School-Based Health Centers (SBHC)** are housed in all ten comprehensive high schools and four middle schools. SBHC are sponsored by five local healthcare organizations and provide comprehensive primary health care, including both medical and mental health care, as well as screenings, health assessments, and interventions that focus on students at risk of academic problems or dropping out of school. SBHC integrate risk prevention strategies into primary health care, with an emphasis on providing culturally appropriate mental and behavioral health interventions. SBHC continue to provide primary care to proportionally more African American, Latino, and low-income students, the same student populations who are proportionally more academically challenged.
- **School Nurses** are supported in part by Levy funds, in schools with SBHC. School nursing services focus on improving childhood immunization rates and managing chronic health conditions. In addition, school nurses screen struggling students for behavior risk factors and provide appropriate follow-up with parents, educators, and service providers.

Student Health Challenges and Lessons Learned

- SBHC have not been as successful in reaching students with limited-English proficiency. Going forward, SBHC will develop partnerships with community organizations to better serve these students.
- The academic target for Student Health was very low, and must be increased.

Student Health Successes in 2005-2006

- The Student Health investments served proportionally more African-American, Hispanic and low-income students, who are proportionally more academically challenged.
- Across all School-Based Health Centers, 4,951 students were served, nearing the target of 5,000.
- The Levy investment helped 2,350 students with chronic conditions, far exceeding the target of 600.
- Of the 4,755 students served in SBHC, 1,585 took the math and reading WASL and 586 met both standards, far exceeding the academic achievement target of 100 students.