

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING (DEEL)

2026 PROPOSED BUDGET

OVERVIEW & POLICY CONSIDERATIONS PAPER

CENTRAL STAFF ANALYST: JASMINE MARWAHA

Table 1. Department Budget Summary

Budget Summary Level	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	% Change	2026 Proposed	% Change
Operating Budget					
Early Learning	\$81.1M	\$52.3M	(35.5%)	\$93.8M	79.3%
K-12 Programs	\$54.4M	\$36.6M	(32.7%)	\$59.7M	62.9%
Leadership and Administration	\$9.2M	\$6.3M	(31.5%)	\$11.4M	81.0%
Post-Secondary Programs	\$6.5M	\$5.5M	(14.5%)	\$11.9M	115.2%
Total:	\$151.2M	\$100.8M	(33.3%)	\$176.9M	75.4%

I. OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

The 2026 Proposed Budget for the Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) is 75.4 percent more than its 2026 Endorsed Budget, because the Endorsed Budget does not reflect the proposed renewal of the Families, Education, Preschool and Promise (FEPP) Levy, and instead reflects only 6 months of levy funding from the 2018 FEPP Levy.¹ Earlier this year, Council passed [Ordinance 127238](#) (FEPP Levy Ordinance), which submitted a proposition to voters to renew and expand FEPP Levy investments, with a property tax levy generating approximately \$1.3 billion over six years.

The 2026 Proposed Budget assumes passage of the 2025 FEPP Levy ballot measure, and reflects an increase of \$25.7 million compared to the 2025 Adopted Budget, a 17 percent increase. This increase is consistent with the breakdown of projected expenditures contained in the [FEPP Levy Ordinance's Summary and Fiscal Note](#), and is driven primarily by significant proposed new investments in early learning, K-12 health and safety, and post-secondary programs, broken down in Attachment A and described below.

If the ballot measure is approved by voters, DEEL would be required to submit an Implementation and Evaluation (I&E) Plan to Council for approval, establishing the criteria, outcomes, and methodology by which FEPP Levy-funded strategies would be selected and evaluated. The I&E Plan is anticipated to be transmitted to Council in March 2026.

If the levy does not pass in November, a revised version may be submitted for voter approval in February 2026.

A. Operating Budget

DEEL's 2026 Proposed Budget includes the following ongoing increases:

Early Learning: The 2026 Proposed Budget for early learning would increase by \$12.7 million relative to 2025, or roughly 15.7 percent. The primary drivers of this net increase are:

- \$4.5 million to expand the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to serve 800 additional children in 2026.
- \$6.7 million increase to the Seattle Preschool Program (SPP), so that current slots offered extend throughout summer and expand from a 6-hour day to an 8-10-hour day.²

¹ DEEL investments from the FEPP Levy are allocated based on the school year, such that expenditures from the last year of the 2018 FEPP Levy would extend into the 2025-2026 school year, and therefore the 2026 Endorsed Budget. The 2026 Proposed Budget incorporates expenditures anticipated for the first half of the 2026-2027 school year.

² Ultimately, the six-year levy will expand to 3,100 slots offering extended day and summer learning

- \$2.8 million additional in childcare worker supports.
- \$1 million for a cost and risk reserve.

The 2026 Proposed Budget also includes a \$1.5 million reduction that eliminates the [Prenatal to 3 community grant program](#),³ as well as a \$1 million reduction in SPP quality teaching supports, stemming from cost savings identified in a recent cost analysis, with no reduction in services anticipated.

K-12 Programs: The Proposed Budget for the K-12 Programs BSL would increase by \$5.3 million relative to 2025, representing a 9.7 percent increase. This is primarily driven by:

- \$2.8 million for expanded learning opportunities⁴
- \$1.2 million for school safety in and around schools⁵
- \$500,000 for student mental health supports⁶
- \$300,000 for health centers⁷
- \$1.2 million for a cost and risk reserve.

These increases are offset by a proposed decrease of \$700,000 in the [Academy for Rising Educators](#) program, which will continue through the 2025-2026 school year, and may be renewed pending the I&E Plan and the proposal for expanded learning opportunities.

Post-Secondary Programs: The Proposed Budget for the Post-Secondary Programs BSL would increase by \$5.45 million, representing an 84 percent increase relative to 2025. This increase includes:

- \$4 million to expand the Seattle Promise Program to serve 1,475 students and sustain the Path to University of Washington program.
- \$900,000 to expand the Path to Trades Program.⁸
- \$400,000 to the Seattle Youth Employment Program.
- \$100,000 for a cost and risk reserve.

Leadership and Administration: The 2026 Proposed Budget would increase the Leadership and Administration BSL by \$2.2 million, a 24 percent increase relative to the 2025 Adopted Budget. This increase comprises approximately \$1.2 million in increased program labor costs, \$300,000 in other administrative costs, \$100,000 for a cost and risk reserve, and \$600,000 in program evaluation expenditures shifting from the Early Learning BSL.

³ 2025 funding for these grants will be awarded this year and provide funding for the 2026-2027 school year

⁴ The proposed budget would consolidate previous funding for school-based investments and “continuum supports” that serve students and families outside of school hours, for a total of \$31.9 million. The I&E plan is expected to propose a more detailed allocation of these funds.

⁵ This is anticipated to total \$2.4 million over the 2026-2027 school year, and average \$2.7 million per school year over the course of the Levy.

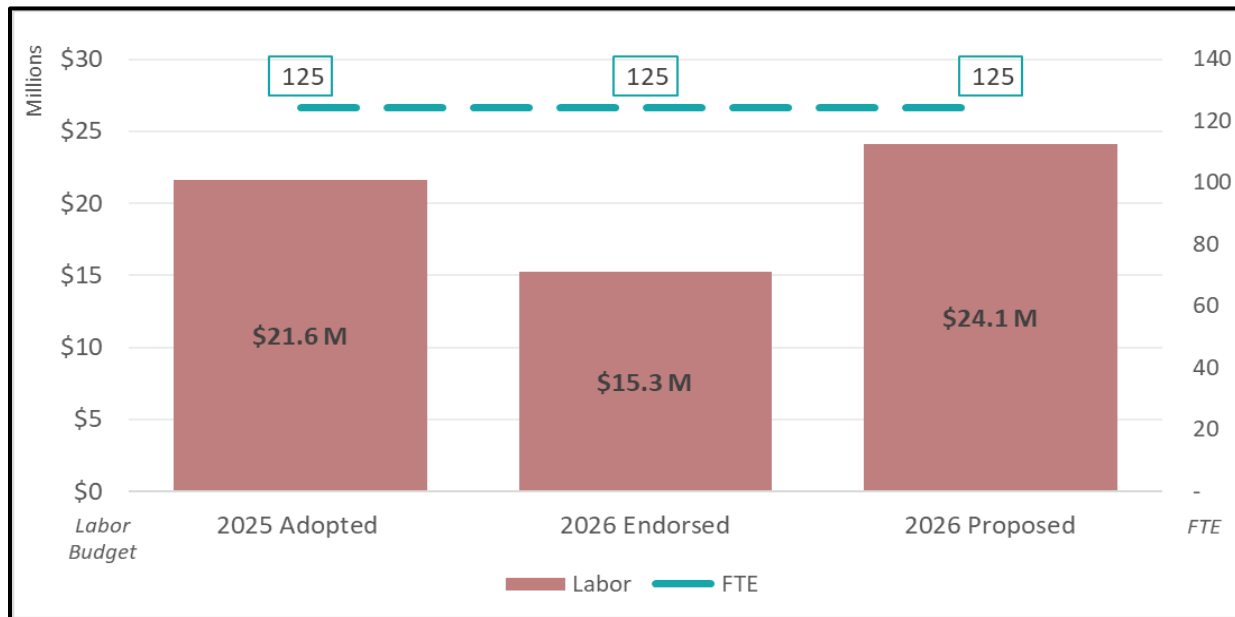
⁶ This reflects the expiration of \$500,000 in one-time funding that had gone to Parks in 2025 to develop the Youth Connector website, and is now being absorbed in DEEL’s mental health programming.

⁷ In future years, the FEPP renewal would result in an average increase of \$4.3 million each school year for health centers, above what is currently funded in the 2018 FEPP Levy.

⁸ This will eventually ramp up to an average of \$2.3 million each school year.

B. FTE & Labor Changes

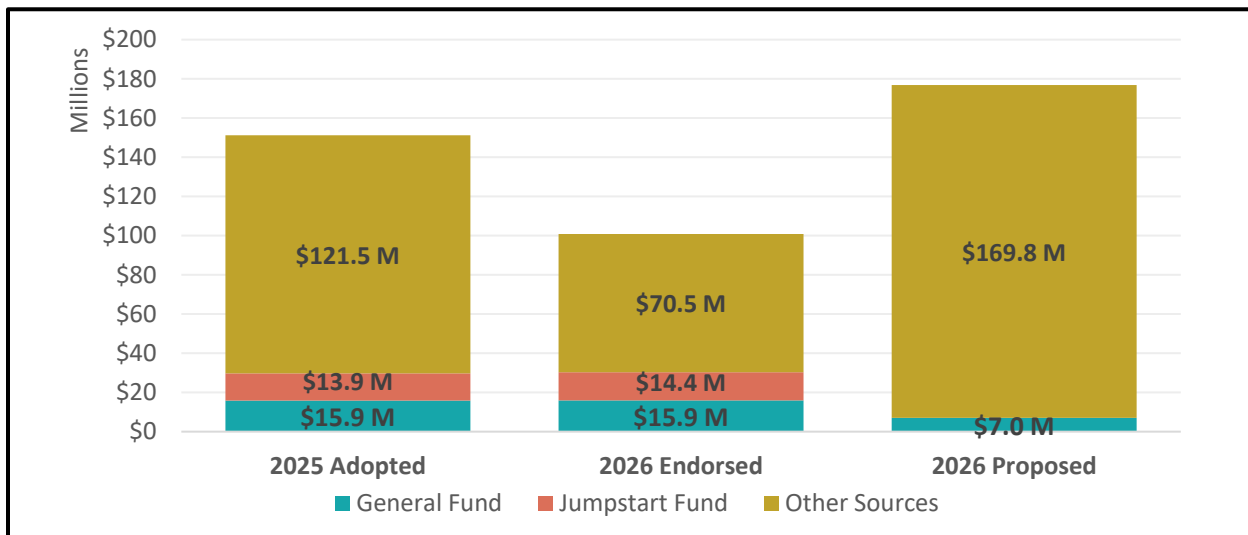
Figure 1. FTE & Labor Budget Summary



The 2026 Proposed Budget would increase labor appropriations by \$2.5 million relative to the 2025 Adopted Budget, an 11.6 percent increase. This increase is primarily driven by labor cost inflation, step increases, technical adjustments for miscoded labor, and city-wide central cost adjustments. The number of FTEs is not proposed to increase.

C. Fund Appropriations Summary

Figure 2. Fund Appropriations Summary



The 2026 Proposed Budget would shift almost all of DEEL's funding to the FEPP Levy. The remaining General Fund represents grant funding from the State's [Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program \(ECEAP\)](#) and a federal Upward Bound grant to support college readiness for low-income or first generation students.

II. ISSUES FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION DURING BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

1. Council Guidance for FEPP Levy Funds

The FEPP Levy Ordinance requires that all Levy funds be spent in accordance with the terms of an Implementation and Evaluation (I&E) Plan, anticipated to be transmitted to Council in March 2026.

The 2026 Proposed Budget proposes expenditures using the assumptions and cost estimates contained in Attachment A to this paper, which largely tracks the information provided to Council earlier this year during deliberation of the FEPP Levy Ordinance. And while it is possible that proposed expenditures might change during the I&E Plan development, according to DEEL these line items will serve as the basis for the I&E Plan and are unlikely to change substantively. During the I&E Plan development, community and partner stakeholders will be asked to speak to strategies, programs and activities within the cost assumptions in Attachment A.

Options:

- A. Approve the budget as proposed
- B. Provide further direction regarding the proposed FEPP Levy expenditures at this stage, in order to establish expectations or express Council priorities for the I&E Plan.

III. BUDGET LEGISLATION

1. CBO Year-End Supplemental

The proposed legislation would add \$1.7 million to reflect a continuation of DEEL's grant from the Washington Student Achievement Council to provide coordinated wraparound support for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students from high school through their second year of postsecondary education.

The proposed legislation would also reduce DEEL's 2025 budget by \$400,000 to reflect the decrease in the Washington State ECEAP grant award for the 2025 portion of the 2025-2026 school year.

2. CBO 2026 Annual Grants Acceptance Ordinance

The 2026 Annual Grant Acceptance bill would authorize DEEL to accept two grants:

- One grant from the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families for the ECEAP Program: \$3.2 million for the 2026 portion of the 2025-2026 school year, and \$3.1 million for the first half of the 2026-2027 school year.
- One grant from the federal Department of Education's [Upward Bound](#) program to support college readiness for low-income and/or first generation students: \$280,000 for the 2026 portion of the 2025-2026 school year, and \$260,000 for the first half of the 2026-2027 school year.

IV. ATTACHMENTS

- A. DEEL 2026 Proposed Budget and FEPP Summary

Attachment A
DEEL 2026 Proposed Budget and FEPP Summary

Investment	Program	Activity	Dept	2025 Adopted Budget (All Funds - Less Grants)	2026 Proposed Budget (Less Grants) ¹	Estimated FEPP Year 1 (26-27 SY)	Estimated FEPP 6-Year Total	Est. # Served 26-27 SY ²	Notes/Comments
Early Childhood	Childcare	Childcare Assistance Program	DEEL	\$5,506,913	\$9,993,799	\$15,786,679	\$91,258,381	1,400	
		Childcare Health Consultation	DEEL	\$1,043,436	\$1,840,452	\$1,243,436	\$8,043,054	150	Sites. See also Childcare Health Consultation under SPP
		Homeless Childcare Subsidies	DEEL	\$400,000	\$449,994	\$499,988	\$3,234,126	250	Monthly Vouchers
		Program Labor	DEEL	\$3,251,817	\$2,670,459	\$3,416,327	\$18,467,782	N/A	
	Childcare Workers	Childcare Worker Supports	DEEL	\$0	\$2,750,000	\$2,750,000	\$18,471,452	5,000	
	Prenatal-to-3	Developmental Bridge	DEEL	\$523,400	\$614,844	\$614,844	\$3,977,063	150	
		Nurse Family Partnership	DEEL	\$2,735,504	\$2,902,096	\$2,902,096	\$18,771,946	400	
		PN-3 Community Grants	DEEL	\$1,500,000	\$0				SBT-funded, never FEPP; 2025 budget funds grants through 2027
		ParentChild+	DEEL	\$1,527,805	\$1,475,326	\$1,475,326	\$9,543,013	230	
	Seattle Preschool Program (SPP)	Childcare Health Consultation	DEEL	\$2,029,513	\$1,505,298	\$2,103,489	\$14,763,281	110	Sites. See also Childcare Health Consultation under Childcare
		Program Labor	DEEL	\$7,687,613	\$8,834,535	\$8,395,067	\$56,388,752	N/A	
		Classrooms and Supports	DEEL	\$43,373,133	\$50,055,949	\$54,600,661	\$382,008,016	2,600	Includes all program models (incl. summer and extended day)
		SPP Dual Language	DEEL	\$220,475	\$276,838	\$336,789	\$3,959,304	486	Included in 2,600 served
		SPP Evaluation	DEEL	\$1,236,277	\$629,406				
		SPP Quality Teaching	DEEL	\$3,638,034	\$2,559,560	\$2,320,983	\$15,013,068	160	Classrooms
	Reserve	Cost and Risk Reserve	DEEL		\$1,002,237	\$2,004,475	\$14,345,287	N/A	
Early Childhood Total				\$74,673,919	\$87,560,793	\$98,450,160	\$658,244,525		
K-12 Health & Safety	Health Centers	Health Centers & Expansion	DEEL	\$9,603,480	\$9,891,585	\$10,037,765	\$83,716,716	17,750	
	Mental Health	Labor & Evaluation for Mental Health	DEEL	\$380,000	\$420,000	\$630,934	\$2,985,832	N/A	
		Mental Health Staffing Supports	DEEL	\$5,200,000	\$5,900,000	\$8,863,119	\$41,125,237	2,200	
		In-Person: Community Hub	DEEL	\$2,400,000	\$2,400,000	\$3,605,337	\$16,729,021	TBD	Summer/Fall 2025 pilot in progress
		Universal Screening	DEEL	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$2,253,335	\$10,455,950	3,600	
		Reach Out - Awareness & Outreach	DEEL	\$560,000	\$528,121	\$841,245	\$3,903,055	N/A	
		Telehealth	DEEL	\$3,860,000	\$3,620,000	\$5,342,272	\$24,788,266	4,580	
	Safety	HSD School Safety	HSD	\$4,250,000	\$2,338,704	\$4,677,408	\$30,339,827	HSD	See also HSD School Safety under K-12 Youth Supports
		School Safety in or around schools	DEEL		\$1,213,273	\$2,426,545	\$16,298,841	Pending I&E Plan	
	Reserve	Cost and Risk Reserve	DEEL		\$384,520	\$769,040	\$4,751,510	N/A	
K-12 Health and Safety Total				\$27,753,480	\$28,196,203	\$39,447,000	\$235,094,255		

Attachment A
DEEL 2026 Proposed Budget and FEPP Summary

Investment	Program	Activity	Dept	2025 Adopted Budget (All Funds - Less Grants)	2026 Proposed Budget (Less Grants) ¹	Estimated FEPP Year 1 (26-27 SY)	Estimated FEPP 6-Year Total	Est. # Served 26-27 SY ²	Notes/Comments
K-12 Youth Supports	Expand. Learning Opp	Expanded Learning Opportunities	DEEL	\$29,013,962	\$31,850,291	\$31,483,107	\$204,452,993	19,000	
		Educator Pathways	DEEL	\$1,101,886	\$405,893				
	HSD Programs	Afterschool & Summer Meals	HSD	\$99,119	\$102,185	\$102,185	\$659,908	HSD	
		Funding for Community Based Organizations (CBOs)	HSD	\$1,121,656	\$1,156,346	\$1,156,346	\$7,467,654	HSD	
		Supporting Youth for Success	HSD	\$3,723,569	\$4,228,945	\$4,228,946	\$26,354,037	HSD	2026 budget includes \$208K for contract inflation
		HSD School Safety ²	HSD		\$1,911,297	\$1,911,297	\$1,911,297	HSD	See also HSD School Safety under K-12 Health & Safety
		Behavioral Health Services	HSD	\$1,913,503	\$1,384,636	\$1,384,636	\$12,151,491	HSD	
	Parks Programs	Community Learning Centers	SPR	\$690,000	\$721,000	\$721,000	\$4,665,000	Parks	
		Environmental Learning for Youth	SPR		\$1,090,000	\$1,090,000	\$6,718,000	Parks	includes \$679K/year Council add
		Red Barn Ranch Outdoor Nature Program	SPR	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$3,883,000	Parks	
	Reserve	Cost and Risk Reserve	DEEL		\$821,226	\$1,355,881	\$7,371,823	Pending I&E Plan	
K-12 Youth Supports Total				\$38,263,695	\$44,271,819	\$44,033,398	\$275,635,203		

Attachment A
DEEL 2026 Proposed Budget and FEPP Summary

Investment	Program	Activity	Dept	2025 Adopted Budget (All Funds - Less Grants)	2026 Proposed Budget (Less Grants) ¹	Estimated FEPP Year 1 (26-27 SY)	Estimated FEPP 6-Year Total	Est. # Served 26-27 SY ²	Notes/Comments
College & Career	Seattle Promise	Path to Trades	DEEL		\$924,976	\$1,849,952	\$14,000,000	Pending I&E Plan	
		Path to UW	DEEL		\$167,503	\$335,006	\$2,198,917	105	
		Program Labor	DEEL	\$780,129	\$872,013	\$851,920	\$5,722,259	N/A	
		Core Components	DEEL	\$2,753,644	\$4,847,152	\$4,782,265	\$30,933,649	1,475	includes recipients of tuition and equity scholarships
		Equity Scholarships	DEEL	\$1,107,175	\$1,423,626	\$872,239	\$5,641,997		
		Student Tuition	DEEL	\$1,844,046	\$3,169,370	\$3,049,272	\$19,723,941		
	SYEP	Internships	DEEL		\$409,000	\$409,000	\$2,645,580	105	
	Reserve	Cost and Risk Reserve	DEEL		\$116,138	\$232,277	\$1,572,605	N/A	
College & Career Total				\$6,484,994	\$11,929,779	\$12,381,931	\$82,438,948		
Leadership & Admin	Central Rates	Central Rates	DEEL	\$2,403,814	\$2,569,361	\$2,704,210	\$19,343,997	N/A	
	Evaluation	Evaluation	DEEL	\$210,000	\$754,980	\$1,189,961	\$7,697,153	N/A	
	Admin Costs	DEEL Administrative Costs	DEEL	\$280,426	\$424,001	\$291,600	\$1,886,187	N/A	
	Staff Labor	Program Labor	DEEL	\$6,315,159	\$7,533,635	\$7,134,655	\$47,922,703	N/A	
	Reserve	Cost and Risk Reserve	DEEL		\$137,988	\$237,509	\$1,990,076	N/A	
Leadership & Administration Total				\$9,209,399	\$11,419,965	\$11,557,935	\$78,840,116		
Grand Total (w/Parks and HSD)				\$156,385,486	\$183,378,558	\$205,870,424	\$1,330,253,047		
Grand Total (DEEL Only)				\$143,987,639	\$169,845,445	\$189,998,606	\$1,236,102,833		

Notes

1. The 2026 Proposed includes a mixture of SY and CY investments; SY investments receive only 6 months of funding whereas CY investments receive 12 months.
2. Some students are counted in more than one category when receiving multiple services.
3. Due to a technical error, HSD School Safety is budgeted in both Health and Safety and Youth Supports in order to stay within the limits of the Fiscal Note.