



Seattle City Council

Central Staff - Memorandum

Date: May 18, 2016
To: Education, Equity and Governance Committee
From: Brian Goodnight, Council Central Staff
Subject: CB 118679: Seattle Preschool Program Policy Changes

At its May 18 meeting, the Education, Equity and Governance Committee will consider Council Bill 118679 approving a number of policy changes to the Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) for the 2016-2017 school year. This memorandum provides a summary of the changes made in the proposed ordinance and briefly describes six proposed amendments.

Summary of Proposed Changes

Council Bill 118679 proposes amendments to the SPP Action Plan (Ordinance 124509, June 2014) and the SPP Implementation Plan (Ordinance 124749, April 2015). The list below provides a brief description of the proposed changes, including which of the plans each proposed change would modify.

- A. Removes the requirement for participating organizations to ensure that all children in contracted classrooms are Seattle residents. (*Action Plan; Implementation Plan*)
- B. Removes the requirement for participating organizations to commit to providing two or more preschool classrooms. (*Action Plan; Implementation Plan*)
- C. For classrooms located in school buildings, creates a selection and enrollment priority for children eligible to continue in that school for kindergarten. (*Implementation Plan*)
- D. Creates a selection and enrollment priority for children whose sibling is enrolled in a school building where an SPP classroom is housed. (*Implementation Plan*)
- E. Expands the “grandfathering” provision to all eligible ages, and allows classroom providers to continue to grandfather children into SPP classrooms after their first year of participation in the program, with the grandfathering percentage determined by the Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) on an annual basis. (*Implementation Plan*)
- F. Creates an option for providers with classrooms offering Head Start, ECEAP, dual language programs, or special education services to select a percentage, to be determined by DEEL on an annual basis, of the children for these classrooms. (*Implementation Plan*)
- G. Allows DEEL to begin developing a curriculum waiver process for high-quality providers. (*Action Plan*)

Proposed Amendments

1. Sibling in School Building Clarification

Relates to Proposed Change D – adding a selection and enrollment priority for children whose sibling is currently enrolled in a school building where an SPP classroom is housed.

Clarifies that this new selection and enrollment priority will not begin until the 2017-2018 school year, if feasible. The department needs to perform additional work to ensure that this priority can be implemented effectively.

2. Ineligible Children in Contracted Classrooms

Relates to Proposed Change A – removing the requirement that participating organizations ensure that all children in contracted classrooms are Seattle residents.

Currently, SPP has the flexibility to allow other types of “ineligible” children (e.g. over four years old, three years old but over the income threshold) to be enrolled in SPP classrooms, although those children are considered “private pay” and are not supported with SPP funds. The proposed policy change related to Seattle residency would create similar flexibility for non-resident children.

DEEL has indicated that the enrollment of ineligible children into SPP classrooms is intended to be limited in nature, but the proposed policy does not specify an upper limit. This amendment would set a limit on ineligible children of 15 percent per contracted provider agency.

3. Curriculum Waiver Guidelines

Relates to Proposed Change G – allowing DEEL to begin developing a curriculum waiver process for high-quality providers.

Specifies that the waiver process should include the input of a panel of early learning curriculum experts and should align with the curriculum waiver process being developed by the state. Also states an expectation that agencies receiving waivers will: have a rating of Level 4 or above in the Early Achievers Program, use an evidence-based curriculum that includes a tool for assessing the fidelity of implementation, and have an intensive, agency-managed plan for instructional support.

4. Curriculum Limitation

Relates to Proposed Change G – allowing DEEL to begin developing a curriculum waiver process for high-quality providers.

Sets a limit of three on the number of additional curricula that may be approved for use by SPP provider agencies. The department must seek authorization from the City Council to approve any curricula above that amount.

5. Demographic Reporting Requirement

Relates to Proposed Changes E & F – expanding the grandfathering provision and creating an option for classrooms serving specialized groups to select a percentage of the children for those classrooms.

Requires DEEL to submit a report to the City Council upon the conclusion of the SPP enrollment process each year containing the demographic information for children who were enrolled. The report must include demographic information for each of the following groups: children grandfathered into the program, provider agency-selected children, and DEEL-enrolled children.

6. Achievement Gap Recitals

Relates to Proposed Changes E & F – expanding the grandfathering provision and creating an option for classrooms serving specialized groups to select a percentage of the children for those classrooms.

Adds three recitals to the ordinance emphasizing that a major focus of the SPP Action Plan is to narrow the opportunity and achievement gap that is present in Seattle's educational system, and highlighting a number of achievement disparities between students of color and their white peers. States that as the City continues to refine SPP, narrowing the achievement gap should remain an essential outcome.