

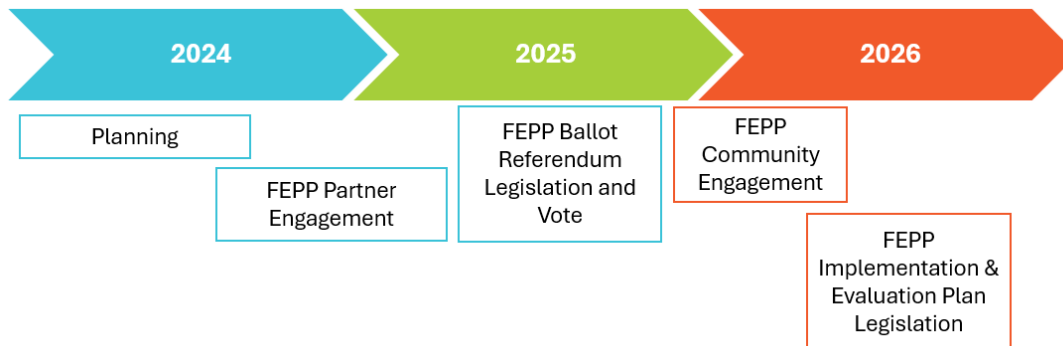
Every Child Ready-Families, Education, Preschool and Promise Levy Stakeholder Engagement Report

Seattle Department of Education & Early Learning
April 2026

Executive Summary

The Families, Education, Preschool and Promise (FEPP) Levy is a critical investment to support Seattle’s children, youth, and families with access to education support services. Since Summer 2024, the Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) convened community members, institutional partners, and current grantees to inform the FEPP Levy renewal proposal and Implementation and Evaluation Plan legislation.

Visual 1. FEPP Engagement Timeline



Engagement Format and Participants

From July 2024 to March 2026, DEEL engaged more than 1,496 individuals to share their priorities for FEPP levy spending and implementation. Engagement occurred across two phases, with the first informing the FEPP Levy renewal proposal to invest \$1.3 billion over six years (2026-2031) and the second to allocate funds and shape implementation details following voter approval of Proposition 1 the Every Child Ready (ECR) FEPP Levy in November 2025 with 80% voter support.

Modes of Engagement

15	Partner Conversations
9	Levy Oversight Committee Member Interviews
8	Youth Focus Groups
7	Listening Tour Events
6	Community Conversations
6	Surveys

Phase 1

58	205	101	298	9
Childcare and Preschool Providers	K-12 School or Community-Based Organization Representatives	K-12 Students	Seattle Promise Scholars	FEPP Levy Oversight Committee Members

Phase 2

127	275	327	88	8
General Community Members	School or Community-Based Organization Representatives	Parents/Guardians	Youth	FEPP Levy Oversight Committee Members

Major Themes

Community priorities were similar across phases, with perspectives impacted by both international and national current events as well as local, regional, and state budget concerns. Across both phases, engagement was focused on FEPP Levy investments managed by DEEL. Phase 2 feedback was more focused on implementation due to the timing of conversations, and questions posed by DEEL. Community spending priorities and concerns from each engagement phase are listed below.

Phase 1: Before Ballot Referendum

- Affordable childcare and enrichment programs
- Persistent disparities in academic achievement
- Youth mental health services
- City and school district budget deficits
- State and federal policy changes
- Voter support for additional levies

Phase 2: After Voter Approval

- Expanded childcare access
- Stronger school and community partnerships
- Geographic equity, language access, and culturally responsive services
- Divergent views on how to promote student safety
- Holistic student and family supports
- Workforce capacity challenges in childcare, education, and mental health sectors

Findings

Overall, stakeholder engagement revealed strong alignment between stakeholder feedback and the stated purpose of the FEPP Levy to invest cradle-to-career and prioritize investments that advance racial equity, close opportunity gaps, and foster student success.

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Background

Education levies in the City of Seattle have a long history, dating back to the first Families and Education Levy (FEL) in 1990. This original levy focused on early childhood education, out-of-

school time programming, family support, and the first School Based Health Center (SBHC) in Seattle. City of Seattle education, or children’s levies, have been renewed approximately every seven years for the past three decades and provide critical resources beyond federal and state funding for social services and student supports.

In 2014, city voters established a rigorous, evidence-based preschool program by passing the Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) levy, a step toward universal preschool access. The 2018 Families, Education, Preschool, and Promise (FEPP) Levy merged the 2011 FEL with the expiring 2014 SPP Levy and expanding City investments to include postsecondary access with funding to establish the Seattle Promise Program, a universal college-access program.

The 2025 Every Child Ready (ECR)-FEPP Levy expanded city investment further to include supports for expectant parents, childcare, and career pathways. In November 2025, Seattle voters approved the \$1.3 billion ECR-FEPP Levy with 80% of voter support. City of Seattle education levies are administered by the Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL), and other funded departments.



Strategies for Inclusive and Equitable Engagement

- **Language Accessibility:** We prioritized language accessibility by offering multilingual surveys, translated materials, and interpretation services at all events. This approach ensured that non-English speakers— including communities that speak Spanish, Tigrinya, or other languages—could fully participate and share their perspectives.
- **Children’s Activities:** Recognizing the importance of family involvement, we included interactive and age-appropriate children’s activities at events. This welcoming family atmosphere allowed parents to participate fully while their children were entertained and engaged.
- **Culturally Relevant Outreach Methods:** Our outreach strategies were rooted in cultural responsiveness. We employed culturally relevant materials and methods— ranging from tailored communication strategies to hosting events in familiar community spaces—to resonate with diverse populations. This approach was complemented by working with community liaisons who understood the unique cultural dynamics of each group.
- **Location and Accessibility:** Events were strategically held in community-based locations that offered ample parking and were accessible via public transit. By situating

activities in familiar, convenient settings, we reduced barriers to participation and encouraged a broad spectrum of community members to attend.

- **Collaboration with Trusted Community Partners:** We actively partnered with trusted local organizations and community leaders who have deep roots in the neighborhoods we served. These partnerships were critical in establishing credibility and trust, ensuring that our engagement efforts were seen as genuine and reflective of community needs.

How to Read this Report

This report outlines the approach and findings from stakeholder engagement conducted by DEEL staff and consultant South Sound Strategies. Phase 1 findings are organized by the major themes across all engagement sessions. Phase 2 findings are organized by Every Child Ready Initiative and FEPP Levy domains: Ready to Start, Ready to Learn, and Ready to Launch. Engagement methodology and a schedule of engagement activities are included for both phases; additional details are shared in the report appendix. Phase 2 findings also include an “Alignment Matrix” that compares planned FEPP investments against community priorities and ranks the level of alignment as high, moderate, or low. High alignment demonstrates consistency between planned spending and community feedback. Moderate alignment demonstrates a need to further explore how the investment can respond to community feedback. Low alignment signals that the planned investment may not match community needs and should be re-evaluated.

Phase 1 Engagement (July 2024 to March 2025)

Methods

- **Interviews**
 - **Targeted Stakeholder Engagement:** Levy Oversight Committee (LOC) members and key policy stakeholders had dedicated space in one-on-one meetings to discuss FEPP Levy investments, ensuring their perspectives were directly integrated into the renewal process.
 - **Deeper Exploration of Priorities:** These meetings allowed for tailored discussions on funding allocations, equity considerations, and long-term impacts, offering nuanced insights that may not have emerged in broader group settings.
 - **Building Trust and Transparency:** By fostering candid dialogue, one-on-one meetings reinforced stakeholder confidence in the levy renewal process and provided feedback that was both meaningful and actionable.
- **Focus Groups**
 - **Facilitated Discussions:** These small-group sessions created a space for dynamic conversation, specifically designed for language-based cultural and ethnic groups such as Black/African American, East African, Spanish speaking, and AANHPI communities. Participants were encouraged to discuss challenges and opportunities, providing a deeper insight into community sentiments.
 - **Thematic Exploration:** Skilled facilitators guided discussions on targeted themes—such as the quality of early education and safety in learning environments—to extract detailed feedback that might be missed in broader surveys.
 - **Documentation:** In lieu of recording sessions, our team took detailed notes using a note-taking template during each focus group. This approach respects participant privacy while comprehensively capturing key themes and insights for later analysis.
- **Partner Conversations (In-person and Virtual)**
 - **Interactive Conversations:** Stakeholders shared and discussed ideas in real time through brainstorming sessions, small breakout groups, and roundtable discussions.
- **Surveys**
 - **Purpose and Design:** Surveys were used to capture quantitative data on stakeholder opinions, priorities, and perceived challenges. The survey instruments were designed with both closed-ended and open-ended questions to balance statistical rigor with narrative context.
 - **Digital platforms:** Web-based platforms (e.g., Microsoft Forms, SurveyMonkey) were utilized to reach a broader audience and ensure accessibility for community members with varying levels of digital proficiency. Where needed, we also offered multilingual surveys—in Spanish, Tigrinya, and other top spoken languages—to ensure that language was not a barrier to participation.
 - **Data Analysis:** The responses were analyzed using statistical software, with particular attention paid to disaggregating data by demographic factors such as age, ethnicity, and geographical location.

Timeline & Participant Summary

Date	Event	Stakeholder Group	Engagement Type
2024			
July 26	Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) directors feedback session	SPP directors	Virtual
August 29	SPP directors survey	SPP directors	Survey
August 30	SPP directors feedback session	SPP directors	Virtual
September 18	Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) engagement session	CCAP providers	Virtual
September 21	CCAP engagement session	CCAP providers	Virtual
September 27	SPP directors survey	SPP directors	Survey
October 11	CCAP engagement session	CCAP providers	In-Person
October 16	School-based Health Center (SBHC) engagement	SBHC providers	Virtual
October 28	School-based investment (SBI) professional development (PD) providers collaboration	SBI PD providers	In-Person
November 13	SBHC engagement	SBHC providers	Virtual
November 14	Seattle Promise listening session	College and Promise staff	In-Person
November 30	PD providers survey	SBI PD providers	Survey
December 5	SBI school staff listening session	SBI school leaders and staff	In-Person
December 9	Community Learning Center (CLC) youth focus group: Washington Middle School #1	Middle school youth	In-Person
December 10	Community-based Organization (CBO) partners engagement session	CBO Partners	In-Person
December 10	CLC youth focus group: Aki Kurose Middle School #1	Middle school youth	In-Person
December 12	SBI virtual engagement session	SBI school leaders and staff	Virtual
December 12	SBI virtual engagement session	SBI school leaders and staff	Virtual
December 16	CLC youth focus group: Aki Kurose Middle School #2	Middle school youth	In-Person
December 17	CLC youth focus group: Denny Middle School #1	Middle school youth	In-Person

December 19	CLC youth focus group: Denny Middle School #1	Middle school youth	In-Person
2025			
January 7	CLC youth focus group: Washington Middle School #2	Middle school youth	In-Person
January 14	CLC youth focus group: Mercer Middle School #1	Middle school youth	In-Person
January 16	CLC youth focus group: Mercer Middle School #2	Middle school youth	In-Person
January 17	SBI school staff survey	SBI school leaders and staff	Survey
February 4	SBI school staff survey	Students, alumni and families	In-Person
February 25	CBO partners engagement session	CBO partners	Virtual
February 26	CBO partners engagement session	CBO partners	Virtual
March 21	Seattle Promise survey	Students, alumni and families	Survey
March 28	CBO partners survey	CBO partners	Survey

Major Themes and Insights

1. Affordable Child Care and Enrichment Programs

Access to affordable before- and after-school programs, as well as summer learning opportunities, remains a top community need. Stakeholders emphasized that working families rely on these services to ensure safe, structured, and enriching environments for their children. Expanding these programs, particularly in underserved neighborhoods, will help bridge opportunity gaps and support students' academic and social development.

2. Persistent Disparities in Academic Achievement

Concerns over financial sustainability were a recurring theme, as stakeholders acknowledged the budget challenges facing both the City of Seattle and Seattle Public Schools. Many expressed a desire for greater transparency and long-term planning to mitigate potential funding shortfalls. There was a strong call for leveraging partnerships and alternative funding sources, such as the levy, to sustain critical education services beyond the next levy cycle.

3. Youth Mental Health Services

Expanded access to mental health supports in schools and community settings was a common concern. Families, educators, and service providers highlighted the increasing mental health challenges faced by students, exacerbated by the pandemic and economic stressors. Stakeholders called for investments in school-based mental health professionals, trauma-informed care, and culturally competent counseling services to support students' social-emotional well-being.

4. City and School District Budget Deficits

Stakeholders underscored the ongoing achievement gaps affecting students from historically underserved communities, particularly Black, Indigenous, and students of color, as well as those from low-income backgrounds. Participants emphasized the need for culturally responsive programming, increased access to advanced coursework, and targeted interventions that support students at risk of falling behind. Ensuring that equity remains a central tenet of the FEPP Levy investment implementation will be essential in addressing these disparities.

5. State and Federal Policy Changes

Shifts in state and federal education policies were identified as key factors that could impact local funding priorities. Stakeholders encouraged proactive advocacy to ensure that Seattle programs remain aligned with evolving state and federal mandates. Flexibility in funding allocations and strategic planning were highlighted as ways to navigate these policy changes effectively.

6. Voter Support for Additional Levies

Discussion around voter support for the FEPP Levy renewal reflected broader concerns about the increasing tax burden on Seattle residents; during this nine-month engagement period, three levies appeared on voter ballots for transportation and education-related priorities. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of clearly communicating the tangible benefits of the FEPP Levy to sustain public support. Transparent messaging, impact-driven narratives, and community engagement efforts were mentioned as ways to share the story of levy impact.

Phase 2 Engagement (December 2025 to March 2026)

Methods

Phase 2 engagement was structured in three formats: (1) Community Conversations, (2) Listening Tour, and (3) Multi-lingual Community Survey

1. Community Conversations

Through this universal strategy, DEEL convened community members to discuss topics across the three Levy domains: Ready to Start, Ready to Learn, and Ready to Launch. Events were held at familiar locations (community centers, libraries, schools, etc.) to ensure ease of access. All events featured interpretation services provided by the Department of Neighborhoods Community Liaison Program that allowed interpretation in 7 languages: Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Amharic, Oromo, and Somali. Dinner was provided by local women and minority-owned business enterprises, and children’s activities were supervised by DEEL staff. Director Chappelle emceed all events alongside a member of the Seattle Youth Commission and presented an overview of the FEPP Levy signature investments. DEEL staff facilitated break-out groups to dig deeper into community perspectives on the three domains. Facilitation centered youth and parent voices.

2. Listening Tour

The Listening Tour strategy allows community groups such as community-based organizations or school Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSA), to invite DEEL representatives into their meetings and spaces to engage with FEPP planning. This format was used for general groups, as well as for an intentional engagement strategy with Native and Indigenous communities. In partnership with the Department of Neighborhoods’ Indigenous Advisory Council and the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Tribal Nations unit, DEEL leadership participated in four engagements for Native/Indigenous community members.

3. Community Survey

To complement in-person engagement strategies, DEEL launched a multi-lingual survey opportunity available in Amharic, Chinese, English, Oromo, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The survey invited community members to share their perspectives and priorities across FEPP investments, Ready to Start, Ready to Learn, and Ready to Launch. The survey was distributed across DEEL-owned channels, through community partner networks, and outreach conducted during engagement events. The survey was live for 6 weeks, February 10 through March 27, 2026.

Timeline & Participant Summary

Date	Event	Stakeholder Group	Engagement Type
2025			
December 2	Magnuson Community Conversation	FEPP Levy Oversight Committee (LOC) members and General Community	In-Person
December 10	Ballard Community Conversation	Parents/ Guardians and CBO-Staff	In-Person

December 11	Denny Community Conversation	Seattle Public School (SPS) Staff, Parents/Guardians and General Community	In-Person
December 16	Rainier Community Conversation	Youth, CBO-Staff and Parents/Guardians	In-Person
2026			
February 24	Langston Hughes Community Conversation	CBO-Staff and Parents/Guardians	In-Person
February 26	Magnuson Community Conversation	CBO-Staff and Parents/Guardians	In-Person
March 2	Washington Middle School PTSA Listening Tour	Parents/Guardians and Youth	Virtual
March 17	El Centro De La Raza Listening Tour, In-language	Parents/Guardians	In-Person
March 18	Southeast Seattle Education Fundraising Alliance Listening Tour	SPS Staff and Parents/Guardians	In-Person
March 12	Chinese Information and Service Center Listening Tour, In-language	Parents/Guardians	Virtual
March 13	Chinese Information and Service Center Listening Tour, In-language	Youth and Parents/Guardians	Virtual
March 23	King County Early Learning Coalition Listening Tour	CBO-Staff	Virtual
March 24	Chief Sealth PTSA Listening Tour	Youth, SPS Staff and Parents/Guardians	In-Person
March 26	Seattle School Meals & Food Education Working Group Listening Tour	Youth and CBO-Staff	Virtual
February 10, – March 27	Multi-lingual Community Survey	Youth, Parents/Guardians, SPS Staff, CBO-Staff, General Community, College/University Staff	Online

Department of Neighborhoods Collaboration

DEEL partnered with the Department of Neighborhoods to strengthen youth-voice, language access, and inclusion of Indigenous communities during FEPP engagement.

Seattle Youth Commission

When launching its community engagement efforts, DEEL immediately reached out to key



partners to ensure the engagement design was youth informed. The Seattle Youth Commission (SYC) has been an important partner and advisor across DEEL’s portfolio of services. To promote the ability of youth attending Community Conversations to really lean in and share their voice, SYC members stepped in as co-emcees for the six events. By having a youth representative on the microphone, DEEL and SYC hoped to convey to audience members the central importance of youth in FEPP funding conversations.

Seattle Youth commissioners Bill Chen (At-Large), Sabi Yoon (District 6), Audrey Mai Trinen (District 2), and Mohini Kaplan (At-Large) stood alongside the DEEL Department Director, Dr. Dwane Chappelle and Seattle City Council officials to welcome attendees and facilitate question and answer sessions, keeping youth voice at the center of each event. During Native and Indigenous community events, Commissioner Aicha

Sinha-Khan (District 5), led a focus group comprised of Urban Native Education Alliance interns ranging from 11-18 years of age.

Since DEEL’s inception Seattle’s youth have been explicit of “nothing for us without us” frame when it comes to building policies around the issues that directly impact their lives. With the Seattle Youth Commission’s collaboration, DEEL is closer to ensuring that is and remains true.

Community Liaisons

Trusted messengers are essential to ensuring the community feels safe in providing true and accurate feedback to the City. DEEL’s utilization of the Community Liaisons program was crucial to eliminating the language barrier for Seattle families whose voices may have otherwise gone unheard. Independent contractors who act as a neutral bridge between people and city government, each Liaison promoted and attended the community events, provided photos, translation support, and summary notes from each event.



Indigenous Advisory Council

During FEPP 2018 implementation, participation rates among Native and Indigenous children and youth has consistently been below 1%. To begin to address this gap in access and ensure FEPP 2025 planning included priorities from Native/Indigenous youth and families, DEEL built relationships with the Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) and Seattle Public School’s Native Education Program. What began in June of 2025 as a series of levy renewal updates to the IAC, developed into a community-specific engagement effort implemented through March 2026.

IAC members highlighted food insecurity, access to childcare and culturally specific trades and careers as key priorities and areas of interest related to FEPP levy renewal. At the September 2025, City of Seattle | Tribal Nations Summit, wrap-around supports and substance abuse prevention and recovery were elevated as priorities.

In consultation with the IAC and City’s Office of Intergovernmental Relations, Tribal Relations unit, DEEL partnered with three trusted urban Indian organizations—Urban Native Education Alliance, Seattle Indian Health Board, and Hummingbird Indigenous Family Services—and Seattle Public School’s Native Education Program to engage Native families on their priorities for children, youth, and families. Across four engagements, more than 60 individuals representing youth, families, and partner Native/Indigenous service providers shared their perspectives with DEEL. Participants represented a range of tribal affiliations reflecting the diversity of American Indian and Alaska Native people in Seattle, including but not limited to Blackfeet, Chehalis, Cherokee Nation, Diné, Muckleshoot, Puyallup, Snohomish, Suquamish, and Tulalip.

Priorities for investment emerging from these engagements included:

1. Ready to Start: Access to childcare
2. Ready to Learn: Wrap-around supports, substance abuse prevention and recovery, and culturally relevant out-of-school time options
3. Ready to Launch: Culturally relevant postsecondary opportunities

Full schedule of engagements:

- Thursday, February 12, 2026 – Seattle Public School’s Native Education Program - Indian Parent Advisory Committee
 - Focus: Ready to Learn
 - Location: Virtual
- Tuesday, March 3, 2026 – Hummingbird Indigenous Family Services-
 - Co-Host and Co-MC: Tia Yazzie (Diné)
 - Focus: Ready to Start
 - Location: Seattle Rainier Lion’s Club, 98118
- Wednesday, March 4, 2026 – Every Child Ready Virtual Listening Session for Native and Indigenous Service Providers
 - Co-Host: Indigenous Advisory Council and Co-MC: none
 - Focus: Start to Launch,
 - Location: Virtual
- Thursday, March 5, 2026 – Urban Native Education Alliance
 - Co-Host and Co-MC: Aicha Sinha-Khan, Seattle Youth Commission
 - Focus: Learn and Launch
 - Location: North Seattle College, 98103

DEEL would like to thank IAC members, including Tia Yazzie, for co-developing and emceeding events alongside DEEL. DEEL also extends appreciation to Kolbi Monasmith and Lydia Faitalia with DON, and Francesca Murnan with OIR for their partnership and collaboration.

Major Themes and Insights by Domain

Ready to Start

The Ready to Start Domain supports the Early Childhood Investment area, and supports strategies such as home visiting, health, childcare, and preschool access. Stakeholders were informed that investments in this domain were planned to expand in the FEPP 2025, including doubling the number of families served annually by the Child Care Assistance Program to 1,400, expanding the Seattle Preschool Program from 2,500 to 3,100 seats by 2032, and sustaining child care worker retention incentives first funded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Across engagement methods, stakeholders were asked questions such as:

- What has your experience been with the Child Care Assistance Program or Seattle Preschool Program?
- If you haven’t used these services, what early learning or childcare programs have been helpful to your family?
- Finding licensed infant/toddler care can be challenging. What matters most to you when choosing care for children under 5?
- When the school year ends, what types of summer programs do you look for? What challenges or barriers have you faced when trying to find or access summer care?

Home Visiting and Health

Home Visiting and Health investments were planned to continue in the 2025 levy without expansion. When discussing these investments, respondents spoke of them as the gateway or entry point to other supportive services for families and stressed the importance of building trusting one-on-one relationships with home visitors, or other social service workers. Discussion elevated that families are more likely to engage with the public school system if they have a positive home visiting experience that lays a strong foundation for parental involvement in their child's success. The need for early intervention and applied behavior services for children with developmental needs was also affirmed across conversations.

"Home visiting programs are very helpful for families in terms of resources, but also provides the families a pathway to receive supports to sign up for future childcare and preschool services." -Childcare Provider, Denny

Childcare and Workforce Supports

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is a longstanding City of Seattle program that helps families pay for the cost of child care. CCAP subsidies are calculated based on family size, income, hours of care needed, and age of the child. The program specifically serves low-to-middle-income families who earn too much to qualify for Washington State's Working Connections Child Care or the King County Best Starts for Kids program but still struggle with Seattle's high child care costs. CCAP families can receive an average of \$10,000 in annual cost savings.

In October 2025, DEEL announced expanded income eligibility for CCAP, increasing the threshold to 110% of the State Median Income (SMI) and making 2,000 Seattle families newly eligible for co-pay support. The FEPP Levy increases funding for the program and is expected to reduce childcare costs for 1,400 children annually.

By increasing childcare affordability for families and making direct payments to providers, CCAP also supports childcare providers in Seattle—the majority of whom are women, minority, or small business owners. Beginning during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Child Care Staff Workforce Supports program has provided childcare workers citywide with stabilizing payments. Among 2025 recipients, workers were 71% people of color and represented 608 provider agencies, including center-based, school-age, and family child care programs. Planned investments under the 2025 FEPP Levy renewal would support for 5,000 childcare workers annually with the goal of retaining qualified educators.

Community feedback themes include:

- **Critical Financial Lifeline:** CCAP was described as essential for families experiencing unexpected life events such as illness and job loss
- **Eligibility Confusion:** Families report frustration when qualifying for SPP but not CCAP due to different income thresholds
- **Middle-Income Gap:** Strong advocacy for expanded eligibility for families who earn too much to qualify but still face significant childcare cost burden
- **Administrative Burden:** Providers report extensive paperwork requirements compared to State subsidy programs
- **Culturally Relevant Outreach and Navigation Support:** Families named a need for information and communication that match community language, technology, and cultural norms in addition to having individualized support to determine options and complete applications
- **Critical Workforce Shortage:** Providers emphasized inability to attract qualified staff at \$21/hour when public school positions pay more

- **Expansion Concerns:** Expanding seats without addressing workforce instability creates an implementation risk
- **Insurance Barriers:** Family Child Care (FCC) and small providers face prohibitive insurance costs that cause closures
- **Pathway Development:** Request for competency-based training and certification pathways for current early childhood education (ECE) workers

"CCAP is wonderful. Child care is critical. They are the first educators. Families need a meaningful opportunity to support their children financially; they can't if they can't work." - Parent, Ballard

"Not enough translated materials... paper translated materials are preferred." – Translator/School Staff, Magnuson

"We have lots of kids, we have lots of families, we need staff. If someone is graduating from UW Education, why would they go into a preschool program, instead of a public-school program?" -Childcare Provider, Magnuson

Seattle Preschool Program (SPP)

The Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) is a nationally recognized, award-winning early learning initiative that began in 2015 with just 280 seats in partnership with four providers. Over the past decade, SPP has grown dramatically and has prepared more than 11,000 Seattle children for kindergarten. The program operates in partnership with community-based organizations, FCCs, and Seattle Public Schools. SPP offers dual-language classrooms in languages including Spanish, Mandarin, Somali, Arabic, and Vietnamese. In April 2025, DEEL announced a planned expansion of SPP from 2,500 seats annually to 3,100 by 2032.

Community feedback themes include:

- **Highly Positive Reception:** Parents consistently reported excellent experiences with SPP, noting children were well-prepared for kindergarten transition
- **Dual Language and Special Needs Support Gap:** Conversation across multiple events identified insufficient support for children with developmental delays, behavioral needs and from multilingual households; FCC providers serving Somali, Amharic, Oromo, and Vietnamese-speaking families are experiencing a greater need for dual language instruction supports
- **Family Child Care Expansion Demand:** Providers reported FCCs fill first due to family preference for smaller, culturally matched settings
- **Curriculum Flexibility:** Request for expanded curriculum options beyond Creative Curriculum and HighScope (e.g., Montessori, Waldorf)

"Phenomenal – so happy with the childcare, teachers, staff, administration – it was a great experience, and my daughter was definitely ready for kindergarten. Highly recommend." -SPP Parent, Denny

"SPP is an exceptional program... Went with Pinehurst because of 7 years plus of staff being together...They provided a welcoming environment for our daughter." -SPP Parent, Magnuson

"Children with special needs is something we need help with." -SPP Provider, Langston Hughes

"My highest values were around the culture and the language [for a Spanish Dual Language program]. It was missing in terms of mission." -SPP Parent, reflecting on the predominance of English in a dual language SPP program, Ballard

Ready to Start Alignment Matrix

Home Visiting and Health investments are not included in the matrix due to level funding in levy, and low discussion among stakeholders.

Strategy	Planned Investment	Community Priorities	Alignment Level	Rationale
Childcare	Double capacity to serve 1,400 children annually	High demand for expanded access to co-pay support among middle-class families and infant childcare seats	Moderate	Planned investment will benefit more families and providers by covering childcare costs; however, it does not establish new licensed childcare businesses or increase overall supply in the City
Preschool	600 New SPP seats to serve 3,100 three- and four-year-olds annually by 2032	Strong support for SPP Expansion	High	Strong alignment with community sentiment; Additional seats will address waitlist concerns
Preschool	Expand funding for dual-language classrooms	Dual language & cultural responsiveness	Moderate	Planned dual language expansion should consider tailored approach to support FCC model and experience
Preschool	Maintain Seattle Public Schools SPP-Plus inclusion classroom and comprehensive support funding	Center- and Family Child Care Center (FCC)-provider supports for children with special needs	Low	Planned expansion maintains SPP-Plus at SPS sites only and status quo funding for comprehensive supports

Ready to Learn

The Ready to Learn Domain supports two investment areas: K-12 Student Supports and K-12 Health and Safety. Planned investments include academic support, enrichment and out-of-school time programs, whole-child supports such as health, safety, food and housing resources, and transportation, family engagement, and community partnerships. Stakeholders were informed that investments in this domain would emphasize out-of-school time supports over school-day interventions, and that the levy would sustain existing youth mental health funding and expand the existing School Based Health Center network funded by the levy by adding five new SBHCs, for a total of 34 SBHCs citywide, in the 2027-2028 school year. Stakeholders were asked to inform the design of new investments in student safety, in addition to sustaining existing supports implemented by the Human Services Department (HSD) and Restorative Practices services already funded by the FEPP 2018 levy.

Across engagement methods, stakeholders were asked questions such as:

- What learning supports or after-school programs would make the biggest difference for your child? For example, is tutoring, homework help, or enrichment important to your family?
- For elementary school families, do you have a preference for licensed childcare settings compared to enrichment or expanded learning programs?
- What makes it hard to access health supports when you need it? (Consider time, transportation, food resources, housing navigation, case management support)
- What would help your child feel more supported, confident, or safe at school? Are there specific safety improvements — inside or outside of school — that would help your family feel safe in or around school?

Expanded Learning Opportunities

2018 FEPP Levy investments in expanded learning opportunities were structured through two types of grants: grant to schools or “School-Based Investments” and grants to community-based organizations. Throughout the course of FEPP 2018 implementation, internal DEEL evaluation as well as external evaluations found mixed results on impact.

Through existing School-Based Investments, the Levy provides intensive, supplemental support to select Seattle Public Schools with high concentrations of historically underserved students and those not yet meeting grade-level standards. These investments focus on expanded learning, targeted academic support, social-emotional skill development, college readiness, and career exploration. Currently, 30 partner schools—serving 28% of SPS K–12 enrollment—participate in SBI, with 82% of students identifying as students of color compared to 54% districtwide. Complementing school-based programming, community-based investments extend learning and development beyond the school day and into the broader community. These opportunities include academic enrichment, arts and culture education, STEM programming, sports, health and wellness activities, and leadership development during afterschool hours, school breaks, and summer.

Together, these school- and community-based investments can create a seamless ecosystem of support that surrounds students with consistent, culturally responsive opportunities to learn and thrive. However, an external process evaluation found that FEPP-funded school and CBO grants are not currently structured to achieve this vision. Additionally, internal analyses found that while some schools or CBOs demonstrate academic improvement among participants, others lagged.

For these reasons, during planning for the 2025 Levy, DEEL began researching evidence-based models to support student academic achievement in partnership with schools and community-based organizations. This research elevated the Community Schools Framework, which recognizes student success as the shared responsibility of schools, families, and community partners.

Community feedback themes include:

- **Geographic Inequity:** There was consistent feedback that South Seattle lacks afterschool programming compared to North Seattle where private options exist
 - Many parents strongly advocated for existing school-based investment schools to retain funding and shared anecdotes of the impact the grant, as well as Seattle Public Schools employees funded by the grant—make to their school communities

- Other parents conveyed that their schools were not receiving levy funding—either because a former principal didn’t apply or because they applied and weren’t funded—despite high need among students
- **Middle School Gap:** Parents identified middle school as underserved demographic compared to elementary children who have access to licensed childcare, and high school students who are more likely to participate in clubs, sports, or other enrichment options
- **CBO Partnership Value:** Strong support was voiced for community-based organizations to provide tutoring, homework help, and culturally responsive programming, especially during out-of-school time hours
- **COVID Learning Loss:** Urgent emphasis on literacy and math interventions for students most impacted by pandemic-era disruptions continued to be a major theme
- **Childcare Cost Burden:** Families report paying \$2,000 a month or more for afterschool care for multiple children, creating strain on their household budgets
- **Out-of-School Time Enrichment:** Afterschool enrichment was identified as key driver of improved school attendance and keeping students engaged, while summer programming serves to reduce learning loss between school years and provides interest area focused activities for youth

"I recommend supporting CBOs to help students with afterschool programming, [such as] homework, tutoring, sports activities." -Community member, Ballard

*"After the pandemic children are being overwhelmed by mental health messaging"
- Parent and CBO Representative, Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute*

"Middle school kids are getting lost." – Parent, Rainier

Student Physical and Mental Health

Building on earlier education levies, FEPP funding primarily invests in the SBHC model, which supports the whole child as well as the broader school community to strengthen access to school-based health services, mental health supports, and culturally responsive wellness programming. The proposed 2025 renewal continues this trajectory, reinforcing health investments as a core pillar of student success and recognizing that physical, mental, and emotional health are foundational to learning. School- and community-based investments with a discrete focus on youth mental health began in 2025 with Payroll Expense Tax; these services are now moving to the Levy. Through these partnerships, tens of thousands of students participate annually in health-related services, including physical and behavioral health care, mental health counseling, health education, and trauma-informed supports. By embedding health services within schools and trusted community organizations, the FEPP Levy reduces barriers to access, supports families, and helps ensure that students are healthy, supported, and ready to learn.

Community feedback themes include:

- **Counselor Shortage Crisis:** Youth emphasized a 5:1,000 Seattle Public School counselor-to-student ratio that is insufficient to meet their needs, reporting months-long wait time for services that is further strained by counselors splitting their time between mental health support and college/academic advising
- **Culturally Responsive Services:** Need for mental health providers who reflect student demographics and understand racial dynamics

- **Group-Based Approaches:** Youth of color shared a preference for group therapy, that they can engage in alongside friends; restorative practices was named as a group model that students are comfortable and familiar with, even if it is not explicitly clinical therapy
- **Tier 1 Prevention:** Mental health strategies need to be universal, not just intervention for those who seek it; Participants stressed that it can be hard for youth to recognize they need something and then even harder to go seek out the service, it should come to them and be low-barrier to access
- **SBHC Impact:** Students report School-Based Health Centers influenced career aspirations (one student wants to become a therapist because of SBHC access)

"We talk about individual counseling for students, but we know that youth of color do better in group situations. We also know restorative practices are huge and need to be embedded. Kids have a lot of trauma from the violence they've witnessed in their lives and need less individual and more collective supports." -Community Member, Rainier (received strong consensus)

School Safety

School safety is a new and intentional investment area in the proposed 2025 FEPP Levy spending plan, reflecting the City's commitment to student well-being as a prerequisite for learning and belonging. This new area responds to growing concerns from students, families, and educators about safety, mental health, and crisis prevention in and around schools, and serves as a direct response to homicides and other gun-violence related incidents occurring in, on, or around school campuses.

Rather than relying on punitive approaches, FEPP school safety investments are grounded in prevention, relationship-building, and culturally responsive practices that strengthen trust and connection within school communities. Through partnerships with Seattle Public Schools and community-based organizations, school safety investments will support strategies such as violence prevention and de-escalation programming, restorative practices, mentoring, and family and community engagement. These efforts are designed to reach students across K–12, with a focus on schools and communities experiencing the greatest needs, as well as justice-involved youth and youth who are disconnected from school.

Community feedback themes include:

- **Community Violence:** Parents expressed significant concern about shootings near schools, particularly in South Seattle
- **Immigration Concerns:** Students and families expanded upon the prevailing concept of safety as specific to gun-violence, but elevating the need to ensure students of all immigration statuses feel safe attending school as these concerns impact learning as well
- **Prevention Over Intervention:** Strong preference for addressing root causes rather than reactive security measures was elevated across events and age-groups engaged
- **Mixed Views on Officers:** Some families support community safety guards; others report students feel unsafe when seeing police
- **Physical Security:** Youth requested basic improvements to SPS building infrastructure such as locking doors and hall monitors
- **Parent Engagement:** Suggestion for parent co-parenting circles as conflict mitigation strategy
- **Food Access:** CBO staff voiced a need for better food education. They emphasized equitable access to healthier food options, including universally free meals.

"Mental health concerns; having a security guard is not that supportive of feeling safe – which ties back to mental health part of things. Youth need a place to go in school when they're upset or when they need a break." -High School Student, Community Conversation

"{School Safety} investing in existing CBO restorative programs, such as CHOOSE 180, Community Passageways, and RBAC" – Community Survey

"SPS programs are very accessible though some might have immigration concerns" – Community Survey

Ready to Learn Alignment Matrix

Home Visiting and Health investments are not included in the matrix due to level funding in levy, and low discussion among stakeholders.

Strategy	Planned Investment	Community Priorities	Alignment Level	Rationale
Expanded Learning Opportunities	Minimum 30 Community School Grants and minimum 15 Community Supports grants to CBOs to provide academic, enrichment, and integrated supports	High value placed on school partnerships with community-based organizations to deliver student supports during all times (school-day, afterschool, and summer programs) as well as ensuring more school communities and students receive support under the new Levy	Moderate	Planned investment will address the desire for school-CBO partnerships and an increase in out-of-school-time services to support both students and working families who need supervised care for their child; however, funding for this investment strategy is now growing and to serve additional schools while also adding minimum standards for out-of-school time dosage will require a reduction in funding to others
Health	Five SBHC expansion and sustained Youth Mental Health investment in prevention, early	Universal access to health care was important in discussion to increase ease of access and reduce stigma; Being able to	High	Planned investments in additional SBHCs align with community feedback about funding universal access strategies; however, youth concerns about SPS counselor capacity

	intervention, and treatment	get an appointment soon is important and worker shortages in addition to lack of cultural responsiveness among providers were cited as reasons youth don't access care		as well as cultural responsive should be further explored to better understand if SBHC- or SPS-delivered care best meets youth needs or is perceived differently
Safety	Sustained CBO-led student supports implemented by HSD and sustained restorative practices in schools in partnership with SPS and CBOs, as well as a new mentoring program for justice-involved or impacted youth up to age 24	Community discussed a range of infrastructure and support service-related strategies to promote student safety, and aligned on a sentiment of not introducing officers with weapons onto campuses; Student immigration concerns were also named as a safety concern	Moderate	Proposed FEPP invests all focus on non-punitive strategies to promote student safety; however, they do not address immigration related sentiments
Basic Needs	Access to services meant to eliminate non-academic and socioeconomic barriers to educational achievement and career readiness by offering homelessness and housing supports and	The need for holistic student supports was raised by students, families, CBO-Staff and other community members. Transportation challenges were consistently raised as a barrier to	High	The proposed FEPP investment is designed to address non-academic barriers to student success by focusing on the needs of students and families outside the classroom that enable youth to attend school and out-of-school enrichment programming

	providing access to transportation services, summer food programs and school meals	accessing services. CBO-Staff also voiced a need for better food education and access to healthy food options		healthy, engaged and better prepared to learn.
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Ready to Launch

The Ready to Launch Domain represents the Postsecondary Investment area, and is anchored in Seattle Promise, a citywide initiative that provides Seattle Public Schools graduates with free tuition, personalized advising, and financial support at Seattle Colleges to remove barriers to enrollment and persistence. In addition to the FEPP '25 commitment to continuing the Seattle Promise program in support of college and career access and preparation, two additional strategies have been added to the Levy to enhance Seattle Promise Scholar’s experience by providing access to high-quality pathways that expand postsecondary opportunities and reduce inequities in skilled trades and related industries. The Path to Trades investment is intended to deepen career exploration and exposure in high-demand trades and related industries, while the Path to University of Washington aims to prioritize access for first-generation and historically underrepresented students to a highly competitive 4-year institution.

Across engagement methods, stakeholders were asked questions such as:

- For those who have participated in Seattle Promise, what has your experience been like?
- How can we get students more excited about exploring college, trades, and career options?
- What types of future college or career goals do you (or your child) currently have?
- How can schools better connect young people to careers where jobs are available and employers are eager to hire?

Seattle Promise

Since the Levy’s initial approval in 2018, The Seattle Promise Program, a 2-year postsecondary pathway established in partnership with Seattle Colleges and Seattle Public Schools, is the cornerstone of the Ready to Launch Domain. Seattle Promise reflects FEPP’s commitment to educational equity by prioritizing students historically underrepresented in higher education and by pairing financial assistance with sustained, relationship-based guidance that helps students navigate the transition from high school to college.

Seattle Promise is designed as more than a scholarship—it is a comprehensive college access and persistence initiative that supports students from high school transition through college completion. Since its inception, Seattle Promise has served approximately 7,000 students, helping thousands of young people enroll in college, persist in their studies, and move toward degrees or career pathways that support long-term economic stability.

Community feedback themes include:

- **Transformative Impact:** Alumni report Promise helped them find purpose and direction for careers

- **Geographic Limitations:** Students express frustration that Promise requires staying in-state; some want transfer supports even if attending out-of-state schools
- **Running Start Interaction:** Students completing 90+ Running Start credits may be ineligible for Promise, creating confusion
- **Financial Aid Changes:** Parents report Promise financial packages have decreased from previous years; better communication needed
- **Basic Needs Beyond Tuition:** Higher education staff emphasize basic needs supports are primary retention strategy
- **Immigration Status Barriers:** Documentation requirements restrict access for some students

"2-year promise college pathway is a good pathway. Upper classmen later decided to transfer to local UW. College preparation: I feel like middle school is too early for students to decide what they want to do in life but make opportunities available for students to explore and switch pathways and leave options open." — High School Student, Ballard

"Need for additional and whole family focused assistance in the navigation of financial assistance." – Participant

Path to Trades

Path to Trades expands Seattle Promise commitment to include high-quality career pathways that lead directly to family-wage jobs in the skilled trades and related industries. This pathway will support more students interested in engineering technology, biomedical technology, welding technology, pipefitting, and construction and building. Path to Trades investments focus on career exploration, pre-apprenticeship preparation, navigation support, and barrier reduction—such as access to tools, transportation, and certification costs. By elevating trades as a valued and viable postsecondary option, Path to Trades ensures Seattle students can pursue multiple definitions of success and launch into stable, in-demand careers without requiring a traditional four-year degree.

Community feedback themes include:

- **Reduced Stigma:** Students report trades stigma has decreased; seeing economic opportunities makes trades appealing
- **Skills Center Barriers:** Limited slots, scheduling conflicts with AP/IB courses, transportation challenges, and parking costs
- **Maritime Opportunity:** Silver tsunami in maritime industry presents opportunity; interest in specialized maritime high school model
- **Exposure Timing:** Early exposure (8th-9th grade) recommended to earning potential, union membership, and career options
- **Job Shadow Access:** Students report difficulty finding opportunities independently; school-year options preferred over summer-only
- **Gender Dynamics:** Question raised about who is being told about trades opportunities and potential gender bias in outreach

"Only a select amount of people can do the skills center pathway at SPS. Students often have to make a choice to do skills center and not take IB/AP courses." — High School Student, Rainier Beach

"No clear pathway for students to go into trades unless they are going into a family business or already connected in the industry." -- Community Member, Magnuson

Path to University of Washington

Path to UW strengthens clear and supported routes for Seattle students to access the University of Washington through both direct-entry and transfer pathways. As part of the FEPP Levy's Ready to Launch investments, Path to UW partners with Seattle Public Schools, Seattle Colleges, and the University of Washington to provide early outreach, academic preparation, and sustained advising that helps students navigate a highly competitive higher-education system. The pathway prioritizes first-generation students and those historically underrepresented at four-year institutions, ensuring equitable access to information and support beginning in high school and continuing through college transition. To date, hundreds of students have been served through Path to UW, helping more Seattle Promise graduates successfully enroll in and persist toward degrees at the University of Washington.

Community feedback themes include:

- **High Interest:** Multiple students expressed interest in UW, particularly engineering and STEM programs
- **Transition Support Need:** Parents report insufficient hand-holding during transition from community college to 4-year institution
- **Alignment Gaps:** Request for better coordination between City, SPS, Seattle Colleges, and UW
- **Peer Mentorship:** Interest in culturally-matched mentors closer in age (e.g., PhD students mentoring high schoolers)

"Mentorship models. Pairing students with matched mentors closer in age. Mentor supports students going into college. PhD students mentor high school students – teach STEM in high school. Culturally responsive match."— Community Member, Rainier

“Transition after community college to 4-year institution... How do we coordinate with other programs?”

– Executive Director, College Possible

Ready to Launch Alignment Matrix

Strategy	Planned Investment	Community Priorities	Alignment Level	Rationale
Seattle Promise	Maintain 2-year/90 credit Promise program including comprehensive supports such as, tuition, Equity Scholarship, and college enrollment, retention, persistence and completion advising	Alumni articulated the transformative impact of the Promise program, while families and other community members voiced a need for more holistic supports to remove barriers to retention. Parents/Guardians also requested better integration with programs like Running Start	High	Planned investment will continue to provide a 2-year college pathway for students, including financial and advising support, however, funding limits are being stretched due to rising college enrollment, making it difficult to offer additional supports to students. Efforts to connect students to other existing City investments will be strengthened
Path to Trades	FEPP Levy investment provides Seattle public high school students, grades 9-12, with career exposure and exploration services in Trades and related industries. In addition, this investment offers Seattle	Community feedback indicated a reduction in the stigma associated with Trades careers and a need for early career exposure and exploration opportunities. Students and families also expressed limited access to Skills Center and difficulty identifying job shadowing	High	With the stigma reduction in Trades careers, this FEPP Levy investment can capitalize on increasing interest in Trades related pathway supports. Additionally, this investment provides high school students with early career

	Promise participants interested in Trades and related industries, program completion and career supports	opportunities without additional support.		exposure and exploration opportunities. Though not explicit, high-quality advising regarding career exposure and exploration for high school student will likely streamline and optimize access to the Skills Center with earlier and improved planning support
Path to University of Washington	Planned investment offers pre-transfer advising and other transfer supports, including credit-bearing summer seminars, \$1000 stipend to offset education related expenses, a seamless handoff from transfer advisor to UW program of study advisor, and peer mentoring from former Path to UW students	Students and families indicated high interest in UW and a substantial need for transfer supports for students. Community also raised concerns about the lack of alignment and coordination between partner organizations to streamline the transfer experience. Culturally matched peer mentorship was also named as another way to effectively support students navigate the transition from 2-year to 4-year institutions	High	This planned investment provides students with advising and financial support for those interested in a pathway to UW. It includes access to peer mentorship and a streamlined advising handoff between institutions. Partner institutions have an opportunity during the implementation phase of this investment to address concerns related to alignment and coordination
Public Sector and tech pathways	Path to Tech offers support for 65 Seattle Promise and	Community members named paid internships (89%) and	Moderate	Planned investments respond to community

	<p>Path to UW scholars annually to complete short-term IT training in AI, coding, and software engineering. Public Sector Pathways supports career exposure through Seattle Fire (Fire Cadet, Fire Prep, Fire Connect) and Seattle Police (Police Explorers), with \$1,250–\$2,250 stipends and year-round programming for up to 90 youth annually beginning in Year 2.</p>	<p>mentorship (77%) as top career-learning experiences, with strong appetite for STEM (51%) and career/life skills (70%) programming. Students expressed high interest in UW STEM pathway. Community members also identified public sector workforce diversification as a priority, so that City service better reflects Seattle's communities</p>		<p>interest in technology careers and family-wage public service jobs by combining short-term credentials with financial support and structured career exposure. These provide the path, yet there is more engagement to be done to get students with these experiences to the city workforce</p>
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Cross-Cutting Themes

Several themes emerged across all investment areas reflecting a need to address systemic challenges to improve program implementation and enable long-term impact. Parents and community members articulated the need for cultural and needs-based differentiation of services and communication to ensure equitable access and utilization of all programmatic investments. While there was a clear appreciation for the holistic approach to serving Seattle youth and families by offering in-school and out-of-school supports, health and safety services, and expanded access to childcare and other family focused needs, improvements in coordination and alignment across partner organizations would help to enhance the overall impact of available programs and services.

Equity and Geographic Distribution

- Title I schools reported nearly all enrichment funded by Levy, highlighting need
- Request for needs-based allocation ensuring high-poverty schools receive priority funding

Language Access and Cultural Responsiveness

- Demand for services in Somali, Amharic, Oromo, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Chinese
- Written materials insufficient for oral cultures; videos and in-person outreach preferred
- Community liaisons identified as critical bridge to immigrant and refugee families
- Language barriers compound parents’ ability to help children with applications and navigation

"What does SPP social media look like? There should be an SPP TikTok in different languages. Some communities are more oral." — SPP Provider, Ballard

"At our school, we have 21 languages...but don't have access to interpreters." — Parent, Rainier

"Not enough translated materials... paper translated materials are preferred." — Translator/School Staff, Magnuson

Workforce Capacity

- ECE workforce shortage threatens ability to implement expanded preschool and childcare seats
- Counselor-to-student ratios inadequate across K-12
- Family Support Workers and social workers identified as critical but understaffed positions
- Teacher diversity investment needed to reflect student demographics
"Teacher diversity is important and supporting educators is important so that they can serve students across Seattle and reflect the students they serve."
— Community Member, Ballard

Program Navigation and Communication

- Families report fragmented systems difficult to navigate without dedicated support
- Direct email and school-based information sharing most effective for students
- Word of mouth through trusted community members reaches families traditional outreach misses
- Request for social media presence (TikTok) in multiple languages
- Immigration enforcement fears create reluctance to engage with government programs

"We need more easily accessible information online. The internet is really big." — High School Student, Denny

Implementation Recommendations

Community participants offered several recommendations focused on implementation strategies to improve equitable access to programming for high needs populations, diversify outreach and communication content, and strengthen the coordination and alignment of partnership efforts. Feedback regarding implementation enhancements revealed the need to ensure broader accessibility and utilization of Levy funded programs and services and to provide a more streamlined and efficient experience for youth and families who are trying to navigate multiple investments. Although there was significant alignment between City investments and community priorities, participants voiced concern about the absence of integrated and coordinated implementation strategies creating barriers and challenges that could hinder the success and impact of Levy investments.

High-Priority Implementation Enhancements

1. **Establish Navigation and streamlined systems:** Fund dedicated family navigators to assist with CCAP, SPP, and Promise applications across languages
2. **Geographic Equity Formula:** Develop transparent allocation methodology prioritizing South Seattle and high-poverty schools
3. **Dual Language Investment:** Expand dual language curriculum support for FCCs serving immigrant and refugee communities

4. **Middle School Focus:** Prioritize enrichment funding for middle school gap identified across multiple events
5. **Workforce Pipeline:** Coordinate workforce supports with expanded capacity goals to prevent implementation bottlenecks

Communication Strategy Recommendations

6. **Multilingual Video Content:** Develop video-based outreach materials for oral culture communities
7. **Community Liaison Expansion:** Increase community liaison capacity and hours for program outreach
8. **Social Media Presence:** Establish social media channels in target languages for City programs (e.g., SPP, CCAP, Mental Health, Afterschool, etc..)
9. **School-Based Information:** Ensure counselors and school staff have current, accurate program information

Partnership Coordination Recommendations

10. **SPS Alignment:** Coordinate levy investments with SPS to reduce student program fatigue and maximize impact
11. **CBO Integration:** Streamline processes for CBOs to offer services in schools during school hours
12. **Cross-Department Collaboration:** Partner with FAS, SPU, and other City departments on workforce development and community engagement
13. **Higher Education Coordination:** Strengthen transition supports and communication between SPS, Seattle Colleges, and UW

“We don’t want to compete with each other; would love for the City, SPS, and CBOs to work together.” -CBO Leader, Rainier

Conclusion

The Every Child Ready Community Conversations revealed strong community support for the FEPP 2025 Levy investment framework. Community priorities align well with proposed investments across all three domains, affirming alignment with the community priorities while surfacing important implementation considerations.

Across the Ready to Start, Ready to Learn, and Ready to Launch alignment matrices, ratings ranged from high to moderate, with no domain showing fundamental misalignment between planned investments and community priorities. Where alignment was rated moderate, the matrices identify specific implementation refinements, such as tailored support for Family Child Care providers, expanded dual language access, and stronger coordination across postsecondary partners, rather than redirection of strategy.

The most significant themes requiring attention during implementation planning include geographic equity in program distribution (particularly addressing South Seattle underinvestment), workforce capacity constraints that may limit program expansion, navigation and language access barriers that prevent families from accessing available services, and mental health service capacity that lags youth need.

Community feedback consistently emphasized the value of relationship-based, culturally responsive services delivered by educators, school staff, and community-based partners that students and families already trust. The preference for prevention-oriented approaches over reactive interventions was evident across all discussion groups.

"If we want to really make practical investments, education is key to build ready to start, learn, launch, and beyond." -Parent, Ballard

DEEL is grateful to the community members, partners, and youth who shared their time and perspectives to inform this work. This report will inform the Implementation and Evaluation Plan scheduled for transmittal to City Council in April 2026, with particular attention to recommendations identified through community engagement.

Appendix

1. Phase 1 Stakeholders Engaged
2. Phase 1 Audience-Specific Summaries
3. Phase 2 Community Conversation Facilitation Guide
4. Phase 2 Community Survey Aggregate Responses

Phase 1 Stakeholders Engaged

Academy for Creating Excellence	Little Jewel Daycare LLC
Adam Home Day Care	Marsin Child Care
Aisha Family Childcare	Maymun Home Childcare
Asha’s Family Child Care	Moyale Home Family Childcare
Associated Recreation Council	Neighborcare
Atlantic Street Center	Neighborhood House
Azhar Family Child Care	Northwest Center Kids
BrightSpark	Odessa Brown Childrens Clinic
Causey’s Learning Center	OneWorld Now!
Childcare Resources	Praxis
City Year	Public Health - Seattle & King County
Creative Kids	Puget Sound ESD - Educare
Denise Louie Education Center	Rahma Home Daycare
El Centro de la Raza	Refugee Women’s Alliance
Empowering Youth and Families Outreach	School Connect WA
FEEST	Sea Mar
Filipino American Educators of Washington	Seattle Children’s Theater
Filsan Family Early Learning Program	Seattle Colleges
Friends of The Children Seattle	Seattle Public Schools
Geeking Out Kids Of Color	Seattle Roots Community Health
Girls on The Run	Seed of Life
The Good Foor Arts Collective	South End Stories
Hallowell Todaro	South King County Discipline Coalition
Hearing, Speech and Deaf Center	Swedish Hospital
Hilltop Children’s Center	Tawakal Home Child Care
Huayruro	Team Read
International Community Health Services	Tiny Tots Development Center
Kaiser	Truss Leadership
Kandelia	University of Washington, Center for Educational Leadership
Kids Club After School Program	WA-BLOC
Kidus Montessori	West African Community Council
Kiki Family Childcare	WSA Headstart
La Escuelita Bilingual School	YMCA
LASER	Young Women Empowered
Launch	

Phase 1 Audience-Specific Summaries

Child Care Assistance Program Providers

Introduction: Seattle’s CCAP plays a vital role in ensuring that working families have access to quality early learning and school-age care. Through a series of engagement sessions with CCAP providers, key insights emerged on the challenges, opportunities, and priorities for improving the program. Providers shared firsthand experiences of supporting diverse families while navigating financial, staffing, and regulatory hurdles. Across discussions, common themes centered on funding gaps, workforce challenges, support for children with special needs, and the need for a more accessible and inclusive system.

Sample Engagement Questions:

- What specific challenges do you have in providing care for infants, toddlers, and/or school-age children?
- For those of you who don’t have infants/toddler/school-age children, what are your barriers to serve that age group?
- How can we better support your program in preparing children for kindergarten?

Key Insights:

- A. Sustaining Quality Care
- B. The Staffing Crisis
- C. Supporting Every Child
- D. The Enrollment Puzzle
- E. Strengthening Connections

A. Sustaining Quality Care: Addressing Financial Gaps

A major concern raised by CCAP providers was the ongoing struggle with funding shortfalls. While CCAP supports tuition for eligible families, providers noted that reimbursement rates do not fully cover operational costs. Expenses such as meals, transportation, and enrichment activities—critical to a well-rounded early learning experience—are often left out of funding considerations, forcing providers to make difficult financial decisions.

Additionally, some providers reported subsidizing care themselves when families could not afford co-pays, creating financial strain. Those who serve diverse linguistic communities, particularly African and immigrant families, face additional challenges in offering culturally responsive programming without dedicated funding. The providers overwhelmingly called for a more holistic funding approach that accounts for the full cost of care.

“DEEL provides enough for salaries, but there’s not enough for food, field trips, and the other things that make a good learning experience.”

B. The Staffing Crisis: Retention, Training, and Compensation

CCAP providers struggle to recruit and retain qualified staff, mirroring broad workforce challenges in early education. Competitive wages from public schools and other industries make it difficult to keep educators, particularly for school-age programs. Many providers are left short-staffed, leading to burnout and turnover, which affects the stability of care for children.

Providers also highlighted disparities in training opportunities. Unlike their counterparts in early learning programs like the SPP, CCAP providers lack access to the same professional development resources. Training on trauma-informed care, behavioral supports, and early childhood development is critical, but often unavailable or too expensive. Providers called for more accessible and language-specific training, especially for dual language and culturally diverse settings.

“Staffing, staffing, staffing—it’s one of the biggest challenges we face. Without competitive wages and benefits, we can’t keep people in these roles.”

C. Supporting Every Child: Expanding Resources for Special Needs Care

Providers expressed significant concerns about the availability of support for children with special needs. Many programs are seeing an increase in children who require individualized attention, yet funding and staffing models do not reflect this growing demand. In particular, one-on-one support for children with developmental delays or behavioral challenges is often unavailable, forcing providers to stretch their already limited resources.

Gaps in access to special education services, such as speech therapy and behavioral support, were also raised as a major issue. Families often experience long wait periods for evaluations and services, leaving providers without the tools needed to properly support children. Some providers have resorted to hiring additional aides out of pocket to maintain inclusive classrooms, but this is not sustainable without dedicated funding.

“We can’t do it with two teachers anymore. I’m paying out of my own center fund for a third person because it’s necessary for the children we serve.”

D. The Enrollment Puzzle: Capacity, Demand, and System Navigation

Despite the high demand for child care, many providers reported under-enrollment in certain age groups, particularly preschool, while facing long waitlists for infants and toddlers. This mismatch in capacity and demand stems from a variety of factors, including staffing shortages, space limitations, and shifting family preferences post-pandemic.

Gentrification and rising living costs have also played a role in enrollment declines, with families moving further south, or out of Seattle altogether. Providers serving historically underserved communities emphasized the need for more outreach and equitable funding distribution to ensure families in all neighborhoods have access to care.

Additionally, providers expressed frustration with the complexity of CCAP’s subsidy system, which can be difficult for families to navigate. Long processing times and unclear eligibility criteria often lead to delays in enrollment. Providers called for a more streamlined and transparent system to better support both families and child care businesses.

“Families need care, but they can’t always navigate the system. The process should be clearer so we can actually connect with the families who need us.”

E. Strengthening Connections: Collaboration and Community Partnerships

A recurring theme across all engagement sessions was the need for stronger collaboration between CCAP providers, City agencies, and other early learning systems. Providers emphasized that a more coordinated approach—especially between CCAP and programs like the SPP—would create a smoother experience for families and a more equitable funding landscape for providers.

Providers also expressed interest in partnerships that could help expand services, such as working with local colleges to create teacher training pipelines or developing shared resources for professional development. Expanding language access services and culturally responsive outreach was also cited as a priority to ensure that families from all backgrounds can fully participate in CCAP.

“We want to work together to create solutions. If we can connect with more partners, we can build a system that really supports families and providers alike.”

Summary: The engagement sessions made clear that CCAP providers are deeply committed to the families they serve, despite the operational challenges they face. By addressing funding shortfalls, investing in workforce development, expanding special needs support, and improving accessibility, CCAP can continue to evolve as a strong pillar of Seattle’s early learning landscape.

The feedback from providers underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue and partnership. As the City moves forward with its levy renewal and early learning investments, ensuring that CCAP providers have the resources and support they need will be critical to deliver high-quality, equitable care for all children.

“We need to invest in the whole system—families, providers, and teachers—so that child care can be sustainable and accessible for everyone.”

Seattle Preschool Program Directors

Introduction: Seattle has long recognized that early childhood education is a critical foundation for lifelong success. Through the Seattle Preschool Program (SPP), the City has made strategic investments to expand access, improve quality, and support early learning providers. However, as SPP continues to evolve, educators, providers, and community stakeholders have raised key insights about how the program can be strengthened to meet the diverse needs of families and children.

Engagement sessions with SPP directors surfaced a strong commitment to the success of the program, alongside candid discussions about the structural and financial challenges that must be addressed to sustain and expand high-quality early learning services. From workforce retention and comprehensive classroom supports to dual language programs and equitable access, providers underscored the need for strategic investments that are flexible, inclusive, and responsive to the realities of early childhood education.

Sample Engagement Questions:

- What is working well with this strategy currently?
- What could be better in the next levy? Consider ways to expand or strengthen these strategies

Key Insights:

- A.** Strengthening Comprehensive Supports
- B.** Investing in Dual Language Learning
- C.** Kindergarten Readiness
- D.** Workforce Retention
- E.** Expanding Access

A. Strengthening Comprehensive Supports: Addressing the Needs of Every Child For children to thrive in preschool, they need environments that offer not only strong academic foundations, but also social-emotional and behavioral supports. While the current comprehensive support funding provides essential resources, directors emphasized that historically, the process for accessing funds has been cumbersome. Many expressed optimism

about the shift to a plan-based funding model, which promises to ease administrative burdens and offer greater flexibility in how resources are allocated.

A significant concern remains regarding the disparity in funding rates between City programs and state early childhood programs administered by the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (WA DCYF); namely Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program 33 (ECEAP). According to providers, these differences across programs as well as delayed payments create financial barriers to ensuring all children, especially those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), receive the support they need. Many directors emphasized the need for additional staff in classrooms, particularly advocating for a three-teacher model to provide adequate attention to children with diverse learning needs.

“Having a third [teacher] inside the classroom would definitely benefit the teachers inside the classroom as well as the students and the parents.”

Directors also noted that while family involvement is crucial, cultural barriers sometimes make it difficult for families to engage with support services. They called for more mental health resources and collaboration with public schools to improve early intervention efforts.

B. Investing in Dual Language Learning: A Pathway to Cultural and Linguistic Equity

SPP’s commitment to dual language programs has been widely celebrated, yet directors highlighted key challenges in expanding these efforts. Funding restrictions and rigid certification pathways limit the ability of diverse early learning programs to receive City recognition and support. Directors stressed the value of cultural identity and language development, particularly for immigrant and refugee communities.

“We just want them to be proud of their identity... We know the more they grow, the more they’re going to receive prejudice for how they look, how they dress, or their religion. But we want them to have a solid base first, before they go to SPS... That’s what we’re trying to show them—that we are a little more than daycare—that we’re going to be here for your kids.”

A recurring point of feedback, was that SPP’s current certification requirements are restrictive and allow for only a single City-approved curriculum which excludes alternative dual-language models. Providers also called for more equitable teacher compensation to retain bilingual educators. Directors emphasized that a more inclusive approach to recognition and funding would allow programs to better serve children and families in their home languages, ensuring that more children have access to culturally relevant early learning experiences.

C. Kindergarten Readiness: Building Stronger Bridges for Early Learners

The transition from preschool to kindergarten is pivotal for children and families. While SPP programs work diligently to prepare students, lack of dedicated transition funding, and tracking difficulties have created significant obstacles. Many programs noted that they are not currently required by DEEL to follow children’s progress after they leave SPP, which makes it challenging to understand long-term outcomes—particularly when children enter private schools or transfer out of Seattle Public Schools. Providers emphasized the importance of building stronger partnerships with K-12 schools to facilitate seamless transitions and ensure that the progress made in preschool continues into elementary education.

“A thing that DEEL could do is help us partner more directly with the school. I mean, right now, we’re all doing that authentically on our own, but it should be a nice transition that DEEL has established for us... I mean, I know they’re going to all do their training, all the schools, at the last week of August. Maybe DEEL could go in and explain to them that there’s preschool programs out here that want to partner with you, or something.”

Family engagement remains a critical factor in successful kindergarten transitions, yet many parents face barriers in navigating the kindergarten enrollment process. Educators called for culturally responsive outreach and dedicated transition support staff to assist families through this process.

“Because we try to get them empowered to go into that meeting, and have that meeting with your kindergarten teacher, because you know, all of them are close to us. But then when they go to the school district, they get scared. And we’re like, ‘You cannot be scared. You gotta go in and be just as strong of an advocate for your child as you were in preschool.”

D. Workforce Retention: Addressing Burnout and Supporting Educators

Early learning providers consistently emphasized that staffing challenges pose one of the greatest threats to program sustainability. Competitive compensation, access to professional development, and support for teacher well-being are essential for retention. However, many directors expressed concern that current funding structures do not fully account for the operational costs of running a high-quality early learning program.

“If we don’t invest financially into it, we’re going to start to lose some of our providers.”

Providers also noted that early childhood educators, particularly those from immigrant communities, often struggle to meet rigid education requirements while balancing work and family obligations.

“Many of my [longtime educators] are fantastic as teachers; they’re the best, most loving people. But asking them to go back to school is really, really difficult, because they have a family they need to take care of.”

Recommendations included paid professional development days, streamlined training requirements, and flexible pathways for teacher credentialing to retain experienced educators.

E. Expanding Access: Ensuring Equitable Growth

As SPP expands to serve more children, geographic equity has become a pressing concern. Many providers expressed frustration that expansion efforts have focused on the North and East, while communities in the South End, where families of color are being pushed further out due to rising living costs, remain underserved.

Additionally, families in areas like Skyway, which have Seattle addresses but fall outside of City service areas, face unique barriers in accessing early learning resources.

“We have a hard time explaining the limitations to our families in Skyway who have Seattle addresses but aren’t eligible. It’s really confusing for them—they think they live in Seattle, so they should qualify. It would be nice to have money for those families, too. We don’t want to turn them away, but we don’t have the resources to serve them under the current funding.”

Providers also called for greater flexibility in class size, particularly for classrooms with children who have special needs. They emphasized that rigid student-to-teacher ratios can result in environments that do not adequately support students.

“Why are we choosing 20 as the golden standard? When you have children with special needs, you don’t want to be at the max.”

Summary: Engagement with SPP providers reinforced that Seattle’s early learning investments are making a difference, but significant structural improvements are needed to ensure sustainability and equity. Across all themes, providers emphasized the need for greater funding flexibility, administrative efficiency, and inclusive policies that reflect the diverse realities of early childhood education.

Investments in early learning must be holistic, workforce-centered, and community-driven, ensuring that every child—regardless of language, ability, or zip code—has the opportunity to thrive. By prioritizing equity, supporting educators, and expanding access in a meaningful way, Seattle can continue to lead the way in building a strong foundation for the city’s youngest learners.

K-12 Community-Based Organizations

Introduction: CBOs are essential partners in advancing educational equity and supporting the whole child across Seattle’s learning ecosystem. Through culturally responsive programming, mentorship, and enrichment services, CBOs play a critical role in meeting the academic, social-emotional, and developmental needs of students and families.

Between December 2024 and February 2025, DEEL convened a series of engagement sessions with CBO partners—including one in-person gathering, two virtual discussions, and a survey. These sessions provided a space for CBOs to share reflections on their experiences collaborating with schools and the City, while also offering concrete action steps to strengthen alignment, streamline funding processes, and build trust.

Across conversations, CBOs expressed a deep commitment to student success and highlighted key themes such as the importance of long-term partnerships, culturally grounded programming, equitable funding practices, and system-level coordination that honors the lived experience and expertise of community organizations.

Sample Engagement Questions:

- There has been a lot of emphasis on student mental health and community safety in Seattle of late. From your perspective, what are the top 3 challenges facing your community right now?
- Considering DEEL’s desire to improve student’s academic and social emotional outcomes, how would your organization recommend prioritizing investment in the following areas: physical health, mental health, tutoring, social emotional learning or college and career readiness? Are there additional investment areas we should consider to meet the needs of youth and families?
- What supports and resources are needed to offer enriching, safe afterschool programming to students in your community during the school year? What supports and resources are needed for summer programming?

Key Insights:

- A. Need for Sustainable Funding**
- B. Barriers to Access**
- C. Strengthening Partnerships**
- D. Improving Collaboration and Reducing Competition**
- E. Streamlining Processes**
- F. Expanding Career Readiness**

A. The Need for Sustainable, Long-Term Funding

One of the most consistent messages across all engagement formats was the need for stable, multiyear funding rather than short-term project-based grants. Many organizations expressed frustration with unpredictable funding cycles, which make long-term planning and sustainability difficult.

“What we’re facing as a challenge is the continuity of resources. It’s not about writing another grant; it’s about building on existing grants to create sustainable partnerships.”

“Right now, it feels like a ‘Hunger Games’ for funding. Instead of competing, we need to educate and lift each other up.”

Stakeholders emphasized that short-term grants hinder their ability to build strong partnerships, retain staff, and maintain consistent programming. The uncertainty of future funding limits their ability to serve students effectively. Participants in virtual sessions also recommended the introduction of mini-grants to support collaborative projects between CBOs and schools to spark and scale partnerships more equitably.

B. Barriers to Access: Transportation, Language, and Basic Needs

Across all engagement sessions, transportation emerged as the most significant barrier to student participation in after-school and summer programming. Many CBOs struggle to provide adequate transportation options, making it difficult for students—especially those from low-income or immigrant families—to attend programs.

“We could have served so many more students, but they didn’t have transportation. It’s the number one barrier.”

“It’s wildly expensive to provide buses, and public transit doesn’t work for many of our families.”

Participants in February sessions further emphasized that transportation burdens often fall on program staff, contributing to burnout, and that legal constraints (e.g., age limits for rideshare apps) and safety concerns (e.g., harassment on public transit) compound the challenge. Stakeholders strongly called for flexible, dedicated transportation funding, including stipends, gas cards, shuttle services, and paid drivers. In addition to transportation, language barriers and a lack of culturally responsive outreach prevent many families from accessing expanded learning opportunities.

“Translation services aren’t just nice to have, they’re essential. Some families don’t even know these programs exist because information isn’t in their language.”

“We need a centralized resource hub where families can find programs in their language.”

Basic needs like food, housing, and access to health care remain foundational. CBOs highlighted that addressing these needs is critical to ensure students can meaningfully engage in learning and enrichment programs.

“We have to feed the people first. Meet basic needs before we can educate them.”

“Mental health and food security are not separate from academic success. They are the foundation for it.”

C. Strengthening School-CBO Partnerships

A major theme across the discussions was the need for stronger, more intentional partnerships between CBOs and schools. Many CBOs reported challenges in navigating school bureaucracies and accessing space for programs.

“We’d love to partner with more schools, but the process is unclear. One principal says yes, another says no, and we don’t know where to go.”

“Schools have after-school programs, but many are disjointed. A centralized coordination system would help.”

The February virtual sessions reinforced this theme and introduced concrete recommendations, such as creating a standardized school-CBO partnership framework, modeled after Creative Advantage, and designating liaisons at each school to facilitate consistent communication and reduce gatekeeping. Participants also recommended year-round partnership models that account for summer and break periods, ensuring youth receive continuous support beyond the academic calendar.

D. Improving Collaboration and Reducing Competition

Several participants raised concerns about the competitive nature of current funding models, which often pit organizations against each other rather than encouraging collaboration.

“We live in a society that incentivizes competition. What if we instead incentivized collaboration?”

“We’re all serving the same kids—why aren’t we working together more effectively?”

Stakeholders recommended creating networking opportunities, shared professional development, and cohort-based funding models to encourage collaboration rather than rivalry. Participants also highlighted a need for structured convenings—not just listening sessions, but spaces where CBOs, families, youth, and schools can share learning and collectively build trust and strategy.

E. Streamlining Administrative Burdens and Evaluation Processes

Many CBOs, particularly smaller organizations, expressed frustration with the administrative burdens associated with grant reporting and evaluation. Organizations working with multiple funders (City, King County, philanthropic) often face duplicative reporting requirements.

“Evaluation is a major hurdle, especially for smaller organizations. The requirements from different funders are similar but slightly different—it’s a nightmare to manage.”

“We need standardized reporting tools across funders to reduce redundancy.”

Attendees of the virtual sessions added that capacity-building support for data and evaluation is a key need, especially for organizations trying to better measure impact without full-time evaluation staff.

F. Expanding Career Readiness and Youth Employment Opportunities

Stakeholders emphasized the need to invest in workforce development, paid internships, and alternative career pathways for students, particularly those who may not pursue traditional college tracks.

“Young people want to work, but they need meaningful opportunities that fit their interests.”

“Let’s expose students to careers beyond college—trades, entrepreneurship, arts, and community leadership.”

The February discussions expanded this theme, with CBOs underscoring the need to reimagine career readiness in light of economic and technological shifts. They called for increased hands-on and career-connected learning opportunities, and partnerships with local businesses, technical programs, and alternative education providers.

Summary: Stakeholders emphasized the critical role DEEL can play in centralizing resources, reducing barriers, and fostering collaboration between schools and CBOs. Across engagement sessions, participants called for the creation of a centralized resource hub, technical assistance for smaller organizations, transportation solutions, multilingual outreach, and more consistent, equity-focused funding strategies. There was a shared vision for stronger, more direct school-CBO partnerships that reduce bureaucratic obstacles and reflect community priorities. By addressing these systemic challenges and centering the lived experiences of CBOs and the families they serve, DEEL can deepen its impact and ensure that every student has access to the culturally responsive, community-rooted supports they need to thrive.

“At the end of the day, we’re all here for the same reason—to make sure our kids thrive. If we work together, we can build something truly transformational.”

K-12 School-Based Investment Partners

Introduction: K-12 School-Based Investment (SBI) grantees play a vital role in advancing equity by supporting whole-child development, academic engagement, and restorative school culture. These partners, representing 30 SPS elementary, middle, and high schools, —deliver critical services such as mental health support, enrichment programming, and culturally responsive wraparound care alongside CBO subgrantees. Through dedicated investments, the FEPP Levy has fostered meaningful school-community collaboration across the city.

To better understand current challenges and opportunities, DEEL convened a series of engagement sessions with K-12 SBI partners. Stakeholders shared perspectives on how to strengthen implementation, reduce barriers, and expand access for students and families. Across conversations, participants emphasized the need for greater resource alignment, sustainable staffing, and stronger coordination with school leaders and systems.

Sample Engagement Questions:

- SBI grants are currently in their 5th year of implementation. What are the strengths and challenges of this investment design?
- The City has heard from young people and families about the need to invest in community safety and student mental health. What are the top 3 needs for your students? What are the top 3 needs for your school community?
- What out of school time (afterschool and summer) programs are currently accessible to students at your school, and how are they funded? Does this meet student and family needs for afterschool care, or do gaps exist?

Key Insights:

A. Expanding Whole-Child Supports

B. Reducing Administrative Burden

C. Ensuring Equitable Access to Services

D. Strengthening School Partnerships

E. Investing in Mental Health and Restorative Practices

A. Expanding Whole-Child Supports: Meeting Students Where They Are

SBI partners shared that their work addresses a range of student needs—from academic tutoring and mentoring to trauma-informed care and behavioral health. Participants emphasized that sustainable and flexible funding is essential to continue providing these comprehensive supports. However, partners noted that program quality can be impacted by inconsistent staffing, unclear roles, and short-term grants that hinder long-term planning.

“There’s no way to provide continuity when funding is year to year. We need stability to build real relationships with students.”

B. Reducing Administrative Burden: Aligning Systems to Support Educators and Partners

Many school staff reported that managing community partnerships requires significant time and coordination. Without dedicated roles to oversee these partnerships, responsibilities often fall to principals or educators already balancing multiple priorities. Partners recommended creating school-based coordinators who can align CBO programming with academic calendars, track outcomes, and maintain consistent communication.

“Schools need support managing all these partnerships. A dedicated point person would make a 39 huge difference.”

C. Ensuring Equitable Access to Services: Prioritizing High-Need Schools

Stakeholders emphasized the need to distribute resources based on student need—not just geography or school size. Equity-focused funding strategies were seen as essential to ensure that schools serving historically marginalized communities receive robust, sustained support. High staff turnover among partners and rigid program models were cited as additional barriers to equitable access.

“Some of our highest-need schools still don’t have enough mental health or after-school support. We need to fund based on need, not just enrollment.”

D. Strengthening School Partnerships: Building Trust and Communication

Partners expressed a desire for deeper collaboration with school leaders and district staff. Participants shared that relationship-building is key to aligning goals, co-developing

programming, and navigating logistical challenges. Inconsistent communication and gatekeeping were identified as major obstacles, particularly for newer or smaller organizations.

“CBOs need to approach schools as collaborators, not just service providers. Programs should be co-designed with input from educators to ensure they meet the real needs of students.”

E. Investing in Mental Health and Restorative Practices: Shifting School Culture Across all sessions, mental health emerged as a top priority. Stakeholders called for investments in trauma-informed practices, consistent school-based counselors, and dedicated time for social-emotional learning. Many participants highlighted restorative justice as a promising strategy to reduce punitive discipline and strengthen student belonging—but noted that success depends on sustained staffing, training, and leadership buy-in.

“Mental health services for students and families are a necessity—but we need these services to be high-quality and consistent.”

Summary: SBI partner insights reflect a deep commitment to equity and holistic student support—and a call for stronger alignment, stable funding, and intentional collaboration with school systems. By addressing administrative burdens, investing in mental health, and ensuring equitable access to services, DEEL can deepen the impact of school-based investments across Seattle’s K-12 landscape.

“We’re here to support the whole child—but we need systems that support us too.”

K-12 Professional Development Partners

Introduction: Professional development (PD) and capacity-building providers play a crucial role in supporting FEPP Levy partners and advancing equity by supporting educator growth, school culture transformation, and restorative practices. As part of DEEL’s Systems and School-Based Investments (SBI) strategy, PD providers deliver tailored learning experiences for SPS educators, school staff, and community members that address mental health, culturally responsive practices, and trauma-informed instruction. Engagement with this group revealed a deep alignment with levy goals, as well as thoughtful recommendations for improving collaboration, outcome measurement, and system-wide support for effective adult learning.

Sample Engagement Questions:

- How do you see professional learning and other capacity building initiatives as contributing to Levy priorities and outcomes?
- What emergent professional learning needs and capacity building opportunities have you seen in your work thus far? What do you anticipate will be needs in the future?
- In what ways has the Restorative Justice Investment helped with school culture improvement, community safety, mental health, and student’s sense of belonging?

Key Insights:

- A. Aligning PD Services with FEPP Measurement**
- B. Scheduling and Systemic Barriers to Effective PD**
- C. Restorative Justice as Cultural Transformation**
- D. Strengthening Collective Impact and Transparency**

A. Aligning PD Services with FEPP Measurement: Shared Values and Trust-Building

Providers affirmed strong alignment with the FEPP Levy’s priorities—especially around skill-building, mental health supports, and foundational capacity development. However, they expressed concern that outcomes for PD are difficult to measure using traditional levy indicators like academic proficiency or college readiness.

Capacity-building efforts—particularly in restorative practices and SEL—were viewed as essential but often under-recognized in outcome metrics. PD providers emphasized the need for DEEL to co-design outcome measures that reflect adult learning’s impact on student outcomes (e.g., climate surveys, reduced bullying). Building trust through shared language and values with school leaders was also cited as essential to sustaining alignment.

“Capacity building is how we protect our investments—ensuring adults feel supported and know how to deliver high-quality programming.”

B. Scheduling and Systemic Barriers to Effective PD

Scheduling constraints, particularly the reliance on SPS early release days (Wednesday afternoons) for PD, limit school-wide participation. Providers called for expanded clock-hour flexibility and recognition of non-traditional staff (e.g., custodians) as key school culture contributors.

Stakeholders encouraged DEEL to facilitate stronger alignment with SPS regional directors and principal coaches to reduce misalignment and bureaucratic barriers. Participants highlighted a need for more trust-based partnerships with school leaders, as PD providers are often seen as outsiders. Ongoing PD for regional leaders and administrators was seen as vital to ensure coherence across decision-making levels.

“Restorative justice work is grounded in love and accountability—not punishment—and it must extend to staff, not just students.”

C. Restorative Justice as Cultural Transformation

Restorative justice investments are transforming school culture by promoting healing, belonging, and teacher empathy. Providers viewed this work as a long-term mindset shift rather than a quick fix.

Teachers’ own sense of belonging was emphasized as foundational for creating student-centered environments. Alignment between DEEL, school leaders, and district agencies was seen as a prerequisite for sustainable restorative work. Providers advocated for restorative practices to become a distinct levy investment area, with clear outcomes and cross-sector commitment.

“Changing school culture is a long-term investment. It’s about shifting mindsets over time—not just quick fixes.”

D. Strengthening Collective Impact and Transparency

To support greater collaboration and alignment, providers recommended creating a centralized portal for monthly updates and stronger communication between DEEL, PD providers, and school leaders. Regional directors were identified as critical players in ensuring school alignment but often lack awareness of on-the-ground work. A unified narrative—backed by case studies and clear goals—was seen as necessary to align stakeholders. Providers also called for

more transparent communication on PD outcomes and how their work contributes to FEPP goals.

“This levy has potential beyond politics—it’s a chance to coordinate the city, district, and providers around a shared mission for sustainable, impactful change.”

Summary: PD providers view their work as essential to achieving the FEPP Levy’s long-term vision for equity, student success, and inclusive school environments. However, traditional outcome frameworks have often overlooked this impact. Providers identified an opportunity for DEEL to strengthen its role as a convener and connector—facilitating trust-based partnerships, co-developing outcome measures, and addressing systemic barriers to professional learning.

Investments in PD must be accompanied by structural supports: dedicated time, aligned leadership, and shared accountability for results. By elevating restorative justice and adult capacity building as strategic priorities, DEEL can ensure that school staff are equipped not only with skills but with the mindsets and relationships needed to transform student experiences.

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs)

Introduction: The renewal of the FEPP Levy presents an opportunity to invest in the health and well-being of students by expanding and enhancing School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs). Through targeted stakeholder engagement, including discussions with SBHC managers, school health teams, and CBOs, a set of core priorities and recommendations have emerged to guide this investment.

Sample Engagement Questions:

- SBHCs are closed afterschool and during summer months. What opportunities or ideas do you have to maintain continuity of care?
- What factors should be considered as the City explore SBHC expansion options?
- Who else do we need to talk to? What are the best ways to engage them?

Key Insights:

- A. The Need for Expansion and Enhanced Access**
- B. Building Effective Partnerships and School Integration**
- C. Continuity of Care: Addressing Seasonal Gaps**
- D. Expanding Mental Health and Dental Services**
- E. Engaging Families, Youth, and Community Partners**

A. The Need for Expansion and Enhanced Access

Stakeholders consistently emphasized the importance of expanding SBHCs, particularly in elementary and middle schools, to address critical gaps in access to health care. The transition between grade levels presents unique health challenges, including the need for consistent asthma management, mental health support, and preventive care.

“We see a critical need to expand SBHCs, especially at the elementary and middle school levels. Ensuring continuity of care as students transition is essential for managing chronic conditions like asthma and providing early, consistent health care support.”

The geographic distribution of SBHCs is another key consideration. North Seattle, in particular, lacks elementary school-based health services, leading to increased referrals to overburdened community clinics. Expanding SBHCs in underserved areas would help bridge this equity gap.

B. Building Effective Partnerships and School Integration

Effective SBHCs are more than just health care access points—they thrive in schools that integrate them into broader educational and community goals. Collaboration between school staff, health providers, and administrators was highlighted as critical to creating welcoming and trusted environments for students.

“The success of SBHCs isn’t just about the health centers themselves; it’s about creating a school culture where staff, from teachers to counselors, are actively engaged in supporting student wellbeing.”

Administrative support, particularly at the elementary level, is essential to fostering trust between families and SBHC staff. Additionally, ensuring that families, particularly those who are new immigrants or face language barriers, are aware of available services is a key challenge to address.

C. Continuity of Care: Addressing Seasonal Gaps

A recurring theme in discussions was the need for solutions to ensure continuity of care when schools are closed after hours, on weekends, or during summer months. Many families rely exclusively on SBHCs for their health care needs, and they struggle to access community-based alternatives when these centers are unavailable.

“Families often struggle to navigate care outside of school hours or during the summer. Without the same cost protections and accessibility, many just delay care until school resumes.”

Proposed solutions include strengthening referral pathways to community health centers, developing summer SBHC programming, and improving communication strategies to inform families about health care options during closures. Additionally, leveraging telehealth options with dedicated confidential spaces within community centers could support continuity.

D. Expanding Mental Health and Dental Services

The growing need for mental health services, particularly in response to increased incidents of gun violence and trauma among students, was widely discussed. SBHCs have become essential in addressing student mental health concerns, and stakeholders emphasized the need for additional mental health providers, particularly in middle and high schools.

“We need to ensure that mental health services are a core part of SBHCs, not an afterthought. Students need trusted spaces where they can seek support, especially in communities impacted by violence.”

Similarly, dental services were highlighted as a critical yet often overlooked component of student health. Many SBHCs that offer dental care report being at full capacity, with high demand particularly among newly-arrived immigrant families and low-income students. Expanding dental services could have a significant positive impact on school attendance and overall health outcomes.

E. Engaging Families, Youth, and Community Partners

A strong theme throughout discussions was the importance of inclusive engagement in shaping the future of SBHCs. Families, particularly those from historically marginalized communities,

need meaningful opportunities to provide input on how services can best meet their needs. Youth voices are equally important in ensuring services are responsive and accessible.

“We can’t forget the voices of the students themselves. Youth engagement is essential to ensure that SBHC services are meeting their needs, and we should provide them with multiple avenues to share their thoughts.”

Proposed engagement strategies include:

- Partnering with cultural navigators to support outreach to families with language barriers.
- Establishing a youth advisory panel to provide direct input on SBHC services.
- Conducting multilingual focus groups to capture diverse family experiences.
- Leveraging school events such as back-to-school nights and PTA meetings to share information and collect feedback.

Summary: Stakeholders emphasized the importance of expanding School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) in underserved areas, particularly in North Seattle and the Central District, to address longstanding gaps in access. They called for stronger integration between SBHCs, schools, and community partners to ensure seamless support for students, as well as improved care continuity through referral systems and summer programming. Increased investment in mental health and dental services was a top priority, alongside deeper community engagement in SBHC planning and evaluation. By centering community voice and addressing systemic barriers, the expansion of SBHCs presents a powerful opportunity to advance equity in student health outcomes and strengthen school-health partnerships across Seattle.

Youth Participants

Introduction: As Seattle prepares for the renewal of the FEPP Levy, ensuring that young people have a voice in shaping future investments is a key priority. DEEL and SSS developed a youth engagement approach that recognizes young people as the best advocates for their own experiences. This strategy prioritizes listening to youth where they are, in spaces where they feel comfortable, and using engagement methods that resonate with them.

Sample Engagement Questions:

- What do you like to do when you’re not in school?
- How do you hear about activities you can join?
- What do you think you might want to do for a career or job as an adult?

Key Insights:

- A. Diverse Interests, Meaningful Engagement**
- B. Safe and Welcoming Spaces**
- C. Trusted Adults and Youth-Adult Relationships**
- D. Career Exploration and Real-World Readiness**
- E. Centering Youth Voice in Program Design**

A. Diverse Interests, Meaningful Engagement: Programming That Resonates

Students expressed a wide range of interests—from gaming, sports, and cooking to poetry, science, and entrepreneurship. They shared that fun, food, and flexibility are motivating factors to participate in programs, and emphasized that services should be responsive to both their passions and their schedules. Youth also pointed out the importance of choice, explaining that being required to join clubs by parents sometimes reduced their enthusiasm.

“We like having options. Not everyone wants to do sports—some of us want to write or create stuff.”

B. Safe and Welcoming Spaces: Emotional Safety Matters

While logistical barriers like transportation were raised, students also described emotional barriers—such as fear of judgment or discomfort in unfamiliar settings—that impacted participation. Youth identified community centers, parks, and classrooms as welcoming spaces and described environments where they feel heard, respected, and connected to peers as the most meaningful.

“A welcoming space is where people understand you and let you be yourself.”

C. Trusted Adults and Youth-Adult Relationships: Supportive Connections

Students spoke highly of teachers, staff, and family members who made them feel supported and understood. Humor, empathy, and consistency were traits they valued in trusted adults. These relationships helped students navigate personal challenges and made school feel more like a community.

“He jokes around, but he knows when to be serious. That’s why we trust him.”

D. Career Exploration and Real-World Readiness: Preparing for the Future

Youth shared ambitious and diverse career goals—ranging from law and science to gaming, and owning a business. They expressed strong interest in learning about jobs, wages/salaries, taxes, and real-world skills. Students also expressed a desire for flexible, part-time work and early exposure to career pathways that align with their interests.

“I want to work, but I also want to do something I enjoy.”

E. Centering Youth Voice in Program Design: From Participation to Partnership

Youth made clear that they want to be part of shaping the programs that affect them. They value environments that reflect their identities and lived experiences and want to be involved in decision-making processes. Participants offered feedback on school safety, mental health, technology use, and what helps them thrive in and outside the classroom.

“When we talk, we want to know someone’s listening—and that it’s going to make a difference.”

Summary: Youth participants offered powerful reflections on what helps them feel engaged, safe, and supported. They called for diverse programming, trusted adult relationships, accessible spaces, and opportunities for real-world learning. Emotional safety, cultural pride, and autonomy emerged as central themes. As DEEL continues to invest in youth-focused strategies, centering young people as co-creators of their educational experience will be key to designing programs that are inclusive, impactful, and grounded in community.

Seattle Promise Scholars, Families, and Staff

Introduction: Seattle Promise offers tuition-free access to Seattle Colleges for graduates of Seattle public high schools. As part of the broader FEPP Levy Renewal stakeholder engagement process, DEEL gathered feedback from Promise students, families, and staff to better understand how the program is working and where it can grow.

This engagement included a citywide survey in March 2025 with over 270 respondents, and a dedicated staff session in November 2024, and a session for scholars, alumni and families in February 2025. Together, these inputs reveal a story of positive impact—alongside recommendations for how to improve support systems, reduce systemic barriers, and ensure every Promise student can succeed.

Sample Engagement Questions:

- For staff: What have been the biggest successes you’ve observed in supporting Seattle Promise Scholars?
- For students and alumni: What academic, financial, and personal resources or supports have you used that have positively impacted your college experience?
- For families: What resources, if any, would help you help your student to identify their plans after Promise?

Key Insights:

- A. The Power of Financial Support and Academic Guidance**
- B. Career and Transfer Planning**
- C. Communication and Navigation**
- D. Relationship-Based Support**
- E. Equity-Centered Program Design**

A. The Power of Financial Support and Academic Guidance: Reducing Barriers and Expanding Possibility

Stakeholders emphasized the life-changing impact of Seattle Promise’s tuition assistance and equity scholarships. For many students, the program makes college possible—particularly for families without generational wealth or familiarity with higher education systems. Among survey respondents:

- 89.3% of students and 88.3% of families rated financial support as important
- 82.1% of students agreed Promise positively contributed to their future goals
- 83.9% of families reported that the program had a positive impact on their household

Families noted reduced financial stress, while staff highlighted the essential role of retention specialists in providing academic and personal guidance. Students described these specialists as trusted adults who helped them persist through crises, build confidence, and connect with resources like mental health services, tutoring, and community supports.

“Seattle Promise made college a real possibility for our family. It took a huge weight off our shoulders and gave our child the chance to dream bigger.” — Family respondent

B. Career and Transfer Planning: Bridging the Gap Between College Access and Long-Term Success

While Promise has succeeded in improving college access, stakeholders pointed to a persistent gap in career and transfer planning. Among survey respondents:

- 73.2% of students intend to transfer to a four-year institution
- 66.3% of families rated career planning resources positively
- Students called for earlier and more structured career exploration
- Staff cited successful models like “Path to UW,” and requested expansion to other colleges and employers

Suggestions provided for enhanced services included embedding career planning into first-year coursework, formalizing alumni mentorship, and increasing access to internships and technical training. Stakeholders also emphasized the need to align Promise supports with students' postsecondary aspirations—whether university, trade school, or workforce entry.

“We need to ensure that students leave Promise with a clear plan—whether that’s university, technical careers, or employment. The structure exists, but we need more capacity to make it real.” — Promise staff

C. Communication and Navigation: Helping Students and Families Understand the System Families and students described confusion around program requirements, key deadlines, and how to access support. Staff echoed these concerns, emphasizing that students often struggle with the transition from the structured environment of high school to the self-directed nature of college. Among survey respondents:

- 61.2% of families rated communication positively
- Staff described misalignments between Promise and college systems—especially around financial aid and disability services
- Families expressed a need for clearer communication and more consistent updates on student progress

Multilingual family communications, regular progress check-ins, Promise-specific orientation sessions, and proactive reminders built around key milestones were noted as suggestions to improve program navigation.

“Often, students don’t realize what’s available until they’re already struggling—even after mandatory events and multiple reminders. The system is just hard to navigate.” — Promise staff

D. Relationship-Based Support: Centering Retention Specialists and Mentorship One of Promise’s greatest strengths is its focus on individualized support. Students described their retention specialists as lifelines, helping them navigate not just academics, but personal and emotional challenges. Scholars consistently identified retention specialists as their most trusted advisors. Staff reported caseloads of 1:300, which they acknowledged limits their capacity for individualized support. Overall, stakeholders called for more staff, culturally specific mentorship, and long-term alumni engagement.

Staff shared stories of helping students facing domestic violence, homelessness, and mental health crises. Given unique student experiences and increasing need for staff support, current staffing levels are not sustainable. Additional investments in personnel are needed to preserve the depth and quality of support that students rely on.

“That kind of support isn’t a ‘service,’ it’s a lifeline.” — Promise staff

E. Equity-Centered Program Design: Meeting the Needs of Marginalized Students Students from underrepresented backgrounds—including first-generation college-goers, multilingual learners, and young men of color—face systemic barriers that require tailored supports. ESL programs are often misaligned with the needs of multilingual students coming from high school. Disability accommodation processes require quarterly reapplication, burdening neurodivergent students. Financial aid delays and rigid deadlines disproportionately impact students with unstable housing or mixed-status families.

Staff and families urged the City to design systems that anticipate these barriers and respond to students' lived realities. Recommendations included expanding dual-language technical programs, piloting culturally specific mentorship initiatives, and streamlining financial aid and disability services.

“The current processes aren’t designed for students like mine—they’re designed for students who already know the system. We need to reverse that.” — Promise staff

Summary: Seattle Promise has had a transformative impact on students across the city, expanding access to higher education, reducing financial strain, and fostering a culture of possibility. Scholars, families, and staff consistently affirmed the program’s value—particularly its wraparound supports and trusted relationships with retention specialists. These connections help students navigate academic, financial, and personal challenges, enabling many to become the first in their families to attend college.

To meet the evolving needs of Seattle’s young people, stakeholders emphasized the importance of deeper investments in transfer and career planning, stronger communication systems, family engagement, increased staffing, and equity-centered design. Seattle Promise is more than a scholarship—it is a community of care and a bridge to opportunity. With sustained commitment and strategic improvements, it can continue to serve as a national model for inclusive, student-centered higher education.

Levy Oversight Committee Members

Introduction: The FEPP Levy Oversight Committee (LOC) plays a vital role in ensuring accountability, transparency, and community voice in the implementation of levy-funded investments. Composed of diverse leaders from education, advocacy, philanthropy, and CBOs, LOC members bring a wide range of expertise and perspectives to the oversight process.

As part of the stakeholder engagement for the FEPP Levy Renewal, DEEL conducted in-depth interviews with eight current LOC members to better understand their reflections on the committee’s structure, their perspectives on levy impacts, and their recommendations for future investments. The following summary draws from interviews conducted between August and September 2024.

Sample Engagement Questions:

- What aspects of the LOC structure are working well, and where could it be improved?
- How well does the levy support students across early learning, K-12, and postsecondary pathways?
- What programs, services, or investments should be prioritized in the next levy?
- How can the public better understand the role and impact of the levy?

Key Insights:

- A. Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities**
- B. Investing in Data and Accountability**
- C. Supporting the Full Educational Continuum**
- D. Strengthening Mental Health and Wraparound Services**
- E. Elevating Equity and Community Engagement**

A. Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities: Improving Committee Function and Impact

While most members feel empowered in their LOC roles—especially when voting or advocating—many expressed a desire for greater clarity about how and when they should offer recommendations. Suggestions included creating subcommittees focused on specific areas such as mental health, Seattle Promise, or dual language learning.

- LOC members requested more time to review materials before decision-making
- Some proposed mentorship or orientation programs to support new members
- Calls to streamline documentation and improve communication about LOC decisions

“I feel empowered, but I want to be more useful. We need guidance on how to make a bigger impact.”

B. Investing in Data and Accountability: Making Outcomes Accessible and Actionable

LOC members appreciated DEEL’s commitment to transparency and the quality of data presentations at retreats. However, several noted that the data can be overly complex and difficult to interpret for those without technical expertise.

- Desire for simplified presentations and visuals that connect data to student outcomes
- Requests for clear, trackable goals that can be revisited annually
- Interest in learning from what has and hasn’t worked—especially in K-12 education

“We need more specific targets and ways to measure success—not just data for data’s sake.”

C. Supporting the Full Educational Continuum: From Early Learning Through Postsecondary

Across interviews, members emphasized the importance of a seamless pipeline from preschool to college and career. Many advocated for stronger investment in early childhood education, as well as a clearer understanding of how levy funds are supporting K-12 students.

- Strong support for expanding Seattle Promise and introducing more postsecondary options like apprenticeships
- Interest in ensuring continuity between early learning and elementary education
- Concerns about truancy, student engagement, and gaps in family awareness of available supports

“The levy should help connect the dots—early learning, K-12, Promise—it’s all one journey.”

D. Strengthening Mental Health and Wraparound Services: Supporting the Whole Student

Members expressed deep concern about student mental health and the lack of accessible, coordinated support services. Several called for clearer definitions of responsibility between the City, Seattle Public Schools (SPS), and King County.

Mental health and wraparound supports were viewed as essential investments

Some suggested models like year-round after-school programs and academies for counselors

Interest in ensuring agency accountability and service coordination

“If we want students to succeed, we need to support their mental health and their lives outside the classroom.”

E. Elevating Equity and Community Engagement: Centering Voices and Reducing Barriers

Members highlighted the need for more intentional community engagement, especially from

students, families, and providers who are furthest from opportunity. Several emphasized the importance of equity in both process and outcomes.

- Calls for increased public awareness of the levy and its role in shaping educational opportunity
- Recommendations to provide feedback to applicants who are denied levy funding
- Desire for expanded supports for multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and youth of color

“The FEPP Levy is changing lives. We just need to make sure the people it’s helping know it—and have a say in it.”

Summary: The FEPP Levy Oversight Committee serves a critical function in shaping and sustaining Seattle’s investments in student success. Committee members expressed gratitude for DEEL’s responsiveness and transparency, while offering thoughtful recommendations to strengthen the LOC’s effectiveness. Future improvements may include creating dedicated subcommittees, improving access to and understanding of data, expanding mental health and postsecondary supports, and ensuring equity is embedded at every level. By fostering a committee that is inclusive, empowered, and well-resourced, Seattle can deepen its commitment to public accountability and shared responsibility for student outcomes.

“The levy is one of the most important tools we have to support our students. We need to keep improving how we use it—and who gets to shape it.”

Phase 2 Community Conversation Facilitation Guide

ECR Community Conversations – Facilitator’s Guide and Questions

READY TO START

Intro: This part of the levy supports families with young children by expanding access to affordable, high-quality childcare, preschool, and early childhood support programs. Investments include CCAP (childcare assistance), adding more Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) seats, and continuing home-visiting programs for new parents. The goal is to help children get a strong start and ensure families have the support they need from birth to age five so children are kindergarten ready.

Getting to Know Audience: I'd like to get a sense of who is here today. Please share your name, if you're a parent or guardian what are the ages of the children, and the schools they attend.

Prior Experience & Current Supports:

- Show of hands, who has participated in CCAP or SPP?

Childcare (CCAP):

- For those who have used CCAP, what has your experience been like?
- What has worked well?
- What ideas or improvements would you like to see?

Preschool (SPP):

- What has your experience been with the Seattle Preschool Program?
- What do you appreciate about the program?
- What changes or additions would strengthen it?

If you haven't used these services:

- What early-learning or childcare programs have been helpful to your family?
- Are there supports DEEL should consider investing in?

Access & Communication:

Preschool and CCAP will be able to serve more families starting in 2026.

- How can we make sure families know about this?
- What are the best ways to share information about childcare, preschool, and home-visiting opportunities in your community?
- What barriers might keep families from accessing these programs?

Infant & Toddler Care Birth–5

- Finding licensed infant/toddler care can be challenging. What matters most to you when choosing care for children under 5?
- *Probes: cost, location, hours, cultural fit, learning environment, trust, availability*

School-Age Care (Ages 5–12)

- What do you look for when choosing childcare or afterschool options for school-aged children?
- How do childcare needs connect with your child's elementary or middle school?

- Do you prefer licensed childcare, afterschool programs at school, or another type of supervised care? Why?
- *Probes: Challenges and ideas for improving access to before/after school and summer care; How transportation affects access to child care; Co-location at elementary school; Licensed vs. enrichment/expanded learning*

Summer Care & Programs

- When the school year ends, what types of summer programs do you look for?
- What factors matter most? (Focus/activities, food, safety, cost, location, hours)
- What challenges or barriers have you faced when trying to find or access summer care?

READY TO LEARN

Intro: The FEPP levy provides extra supports beyond basic education — like tutoring, academic enrichment, food resources, health services, family activities, and emotional support — to help students and families thrive. We want to know which of these are most important to you. We will discuss these with 4 themes: 1) Academic support & enrichment, 2) Whole-child supports, 3) Family engagement and community building, and 4) community partnerships.

Getting to Know Audience: I'd like to get a sense of who is here today. Please share your name, if you're a student – please share your grade and school. If you're a parent or guardian, please share the ages of your children and the schools they attend.

Academic Support & Enrichment:

These are programs that help students learn, grow, and explore their interests beyond regular class time. Every child learns differently, and some may need extra help to feel confident and keep up. Supports like tutoring, homework help, reading or math assistance, and weekend learning labs help close learning gaps. Enrichment activities—such as STEM or robotics clubs, art, music, and other hands-on programs—give students chances to discover new skills and connect with peers around shared interests. Academic Support and enrichment activities aim to improve school attendance and academic outcomes.

- What learning supports or after-school programs would make the biggest difference for your child? For example, is tutoring, homework help, or enrichment important to your family?
- Do you like to access services at your school or in community settings? When do you like to access services?
- What activities do you wish the school offered more of or provided (before, during, afterschool, and summer programming)?
- For elementary school families, do you have a preference for licensed childcare settings compared to enrichment or expanded learning programs?
- Have you experienced any barriers to accessing academic or enrichment supports? (Focus/activities, food, safety, cost, location, hours, transportation, etc.)
- *Probes: Elementary/middle school needs; Preference for kinship care or at-home supports;*

Whole-Child Supports:

Whole-child supports are the services and programs that help meet *all* of a student's needs— not just academics. This includes access to health care at School Based Health Centers,

mental-health support including telehealth services, safety measures, food and housing resources, reliable transportation, sports and physical activity, and positive relationships with caring adults like mentors or coaches. These supports help students feel healthy, safe, connected, and ready to learn.

- What kinds of basic needs supports would make the biggest difference for your family? What would help your child feel more supported, confident, or safe at school?
- What makes it hard to access health supports when you need it? (Consider time, transportation, food resources, housing navigation, case management support)
- Are there barriers that make it hard to use these supports when needed?
- Are there specific safety improvements — inside or outside of school — that would help your family feel safe in or around school?
- ALT: What safety concerns do you have, and what would make you feel better supported in addressing them?

Family Engagement & Community Building:

When families feel connected to their child’s school, students do better. Strong family-school relationships help improve attendance, academic success, emotional wellbeing, and trust. When families feel welcomed and heard, they’re more able to partner with teachers, participate in decision-making, and access the supports their child needs. A connected school community also reduces isolation, strengthens relationships among families, and creates a more supportive environment for every student.

- What would help you feel more connected to the school and able to participate?
- What types of events would you be interested in attending?
- How can the schools or community organizations communicate or involve you more effectively?

Community Partnerships:

Schools often work with community organizations to bring in extra support—things like tutoring, after-school programs, childcare, health clinics, food resources, transportation help, or family engagement activities. We want to hear what partnerships matter most to you.

- What community services or partnerships are available at your child’s school that are working well, or that you wish were available?
- *Examples: tutoring, afterschool academic enrichment, childcare, health clinics, food access, workforce support, transportation, family programs.*
- How could schools partner better with community organizations to meet your family’s needs?
- What else should we know about the needs of students and families in your school community?
- Student Version (if applicable): What kinds of community programs—like mentors, internships, or clubs—would make school more helpful for your future?

READY TO LAUNCH

Intro: This part of the levy focuses on helping students successfully transition from high school into college, apprenticeships, trades, or careers. FEPP levy funding supports access to college readiness programs, financial aid guidance, apprenticeship pathways, and career exploration so every student—no matter their background—has real choices after graduation. The goal is to

ensure students are prepared, confident, and supported in pursuing whatever path fits their interests and future goals.

Getting to Know Audience: I'd like to get a sense of who is here today. Please share your name, if you're a student – please share your grade and school. If you're a parent or guardian, please share the ages of your children and the schools they attend.

Prior Experience & Current Supports:

- Show of hands, who has participated in the Seattle Promise program?

Seattle Promise:

- For those who have participated in Seattle Promise, what has your experience been like?
- What has worked well?
- What ideas or improvements would you like to see?
- ALT: Here are examples of what we currently offer to help Promise students stay on track (college coaching, financial aid help, persistence supports). What else could help students succeed once they enter college or a post-secondary program?

Access & Communication:

- How can we get students more excited about exploring college, trades, and career options?
- What kinds of support would help you, your friends, or your child feel more prepared for life after high school?
- What barriers do you think students face when trying to access these opportunities?

Youth Interests:

- What types of future college or career goals do you (or your child) currently have?
- When you think about trade careers—there are 100+ options—what supports do students need to explore these paths? Some examples include construction, manufacturing technology, and maintenance technicians. What would be helpful in creating awareness and exploration of these kinds of careers? In navigating postsecondary pathways? In being placed in a job/position?
- What kinds of experiences (mentors, job shadows, internships, career fairs) would be most helpful?
- How can schools better connect young people to careers where jobs are available and employers are eager to hire?
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Phase 2 Community Survey Aggregate Responses

Q1. Please select the identities that best represent you. (Select all that apply)	Percent	N
Youth (K-12 or college student, ages 5-24)	12.12%	32
Parent or Guardian	60.98%	161
General community member	19.32%	51
Early childhood and learning staff	11.36%	30

K-12 public, private, or charter school staff	15.53%	41
Community-based organization staff (including health services, youth development, academics, enrichment, etc.)	19.70%	52
Colleges or University staff	1.89%	5
Other (please specify)	4.17%	11
	Answered	264

Q2. What is your race or ethnicity? (Select all that apply)	Percent	N
Prefer not to answer	6.44%	17
American Indian or Alaska Native	4.55%	12
Asian	14.39%	38
Black or African American	20.45%	54
Hispanic or Latino/X	8.71%	23
Middle Eastern or North African	1.14%	3
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1.14%	3
White	52.65%	139
Another race or ethnicity (please specify)	1.52%	4
	Answered	264

Q5. Would you like to provide feedback on Ready to Start?	Percent	N
Yes	74.81%	202
No	25.19%	68
	Answered	270

Q6. What are the best ways to share information about early childhood services in your community? Select up to 3.	Percent	N
Ads on public transit	48.17%	79
Faith Leaders	12.20%	20
In-person community events	51.22%	84
Virtual community events	25.00%	41
TikTok	17.07%	28
Flyers in libraries or clinics	64.63%	106
Facebook or Instagram ads	55.49%	91
Radio ads	8.54%	14
TV ads	7.93%	13
Magazine or newspaper ads	9.15%	15
Another way (please specify)	18.90%	31
	Answered	164

Q7. What barriers prevent families in your community from accessing early childhood support programs? Select all that apply.	Percent	N
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I'm not sure	6.55%	11
Cost	70.24%	118
Safety concerns	19.64%	33
Location or Transportation (too far, not accessible, etc.)	47.62%	80
Hours offered did not work for our schedule	50.60%	85
Language barriers	33.93%	57
Distrust of government programs	20.24%	34
Immigration concerns	28.57%	48
Assume they don't qualify	45.24%	76
Another barrier (please specify)	19.64%	33
	Answered	168

Q8. What matters most to you when choosing care for children under 5 years old? Select up to 3.	Percent	N
Not sure or doesn't apply to me	8.33%	14
Cost	67.26%	113
Location close to home	52.98%	89
Location close to work	19.64%	33
Hours	54.17%	91
Cultural fit	21.43%	36
Learning environment	41.07%	69
Trust and comfort with caregivers after meeting them	58.93%	99
Competency in caring for children with special needs	19.05%	32
Something else (please specify)	7.14%	12
	Answered	168

Q9. What does "affordable" childcare cost look like for your family? Think about the combined cost for all your children.	Percent	N
Not sure or doesn't apply to me	22.89%	38
<\$100/month	9.04%	15
\$100-\$500/ month	19.88%	33
\$500-\$999/ month	18.67%	31
\$1000-\$1499/ month	13.25%	22
\$1500-\$1999/ month	6.02%	10
\$2000-\$2499/ month	4.82%	8
\$2500-\$2999/month	1.81%	3
\$3000+/ month	1.20%	2
Another amount	2.41%	4
	Answered	166

Q10. Which DEEL program(s) have you participated in?	Percent	N
None	49.06%	78

Subsidized childcare through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)	9.43%	15
Preschool through the Seattle Preschool Program (SPP)	34.59%	55
Home visiting through Nurse Family Partnership or Parent-Child+	2.52%	4
Developmental Bridge	4.40%	7
Another early learning program (please specify)	7.55%	12
	Answered	159

Q11. Based on your experience, what level of improvement is needed?	Major improvements needed		Minor improvements needed		No improvements needed		Don't know	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Subsidized childcare through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)	20.00%	3	40.00%	6	13.33%	2	26.67%	4
Preschool through the Seattle Preschool Program (SPP)	7.14%	4	58.93%	33	30.36%	17	3.57%	2
Home visiting through Nurse Family Partnership or Parent-Child+	50.00%	2	50.00%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Developmental Bridge	0.00%	0	57.14%	4	28.57%	2	14.29%	1
[Insert text from Other]	16.67%	2	25.00%	3	50.00%	6	8.33%	1
							Answered	82

Q12. Would you like to provide feedback on Ready to Learn?	Percent	N
Yes	82.08%	197
No	17.92%	43
	Answered	240

Q13. Academic Supports	Percent	N
Tutoring (individual or in small groups)	75.32%	116
Extra school-day classes in core subjects like reading and math	37.66%	58
Support for English learners	50.65%	78
Access to a study/homework space with adult support	41.56%	64
	Answered	154

Q14. Enrichment	Percent	N
Arts, music, or cultural programs	83.87%	130
Sports or physical activity	52.26%	81

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)	50.97%	79
Career or life skills (leadership, financial literacy, etc.)	70.32%	109
	Answered	155

Q15. When should academic or enrichment supports be offered?		
	Percent	N
Not sure or doesn't apply to me	1.27%	2
Before school	23.42%	37
During school	58.23%	92
After school	82.91%	131
Weekends	33.54%	53
Summer	63.92%	101
Another time (please specify)	3.80%	6
	Answered	158

Q16. Where should academic or enrichments services or programs be offered? (Select top 3)		
	Percent	N
Not sure or doesn't apply to me	2.53%	4
At my child's school	87.34%	138
At a nearby school	41.14%	65
At a community center	64.56%	102
At a cultural or faith-based organization	17.09%	27
At a licensed childcare site	15.19%	24
Online/virtually	13.29%	21
Another location (please specify)	6.96%	11
	Answered	158

Q17. Program Features										
	Very important		Somewhat important		Neither Important nor Unimportant		Somewhat Not Important		Not Important at all	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Staff and program materials match the culture and ethnicity of students (Culturally relevant programming)	51.61%	80	32.26%	50	10.97%	17	2.58%	4	2.58%	4
More adults in the room (High	49.02%	75	43.79%	67	5.88%	9	1.31%	2	0.00%	0

adult-to-student ratio)										
Focus on academic support	55.24%	79	35.66%	51	7.69%	11	1.40%	2	0.00%	0
Focus on enrichment (arts, sports, STEM, etc.)	55.84%	86	32.47%	50	8.44%	13	2.60%	4	0.65%	1
Focus on student supports (mental health, social and emotional wellness)	73.03%	111	20.39%	31	5.26%	8	0.66%	1	0.66%	1
Licensed childcare for kids 5-12, meaning that the program meets requirements established by the state Department of Children Youth and Family	44.81%	69	30.52%	47	14.29%	22	6.49%	10	3.90%	6
Another Program Feature (please specify)									Total	12
									Answered	155

Q18. Accessibility										
	Very important		Somewhat important		Neither Important nor Unimportant		Somewhat Not Important		Not Important at all	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Free or low-cost	78.67%	118	16.00%	24	3.33%	5	1.33%	2	0.67%	1
Public transportation is nearby (bus, within walking distance, etc.)	54.00%	81	32.00%	48	10.00%	15	1.33%	2	2.67%	4
School bus transportation home is provided	43.33%	65	41.33%	62	10.67%	16	2.67%	4	2.00%	3
Another Accessibility feature (please specify)									Total	12

								Answered	155
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Q19. How, if at all, are your needs for summer programs different from the school year? (Select all that apply)	Percent	N
Not sure or doesn't apply to me	14.29%	22
We need longer hours	29.87%	46
Academic learning is more important	16.88%	26
Enrichment and recreation are more important	56.49%	87
Transportation needs are different	25.32%	39
Preferred locations are different	16.88%	26
Our needs are mostly the same	25.32%	39
Other (please specify)	6.49%	10
	Answered	154

Q20. What barriers prevent students and families in your community from accessing K-12 support programs? Select all that apply.	Percent	N
I'm not sure	11.92%	18
The activities do not meet child's needs/interests	34.44%	52
Food was not offered or didn't meet needs	20.53%	31
Cost	55.63%	84
Safety concerns	17.22%	26
Location or Transportation (too far, not accessible, etc.)	49.67%	75
Hours offered do not work for schedule	49.67%	75
Language barriers	27.15%	41
Distrust of government programs	11.92%	18
Immigration concerns	18.54%	28
Assume they don't qualify	26.49%	40
Another barrier (please specify)	13.25%	20
	Answered	151

Q21. Health & Wellness	Percent	N
Physical health (medical) services offered at school	50.67%	76
Mental health therapy services at school	82.00%	123
Mental health therapy offered online (Telehealth)	24.00%	36
Help finding a primary care provider (doctor) or dentist	17.33%	26
Vision/hearing screenings	26.00%	39
Food resources (school meals, pantry, weekend food, summer meals)	74.00%	111
Housing support or help navigating housing systems	44.00%	66
Help connecting to other services	41.33%	62
Another health & wellness support (please specify)	7.33%	11
	Answered	150

Q22. Safety & School Climate	Percent	N
Anti-bullying supports	51.70%	76
Support with digital/internet safety	54.42%	80
Conflict resolution or restorative practices	68.71%	101
Support with physical safety or school security	42.86%	63
Attendance support	32.65%	48
Another safety & school climate support (please specify)	8.84%	13
	Answered	147

Q23. Community Partnerships: Which community services or partnerships at your child's school work well, not well, or would you like to see added?	Working Well		Not Working Well		Wish it were Available		Not Sure	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Tutoring	20.14%	28	7.91%	11	20.86%	29	51.08%	71
Afterschool academic enrichment	32.37%	45	8.63%	12	28.06%	39	30.94%	43
Childcare	28.68%	39	9.56%	13	17.65%	24	44.12%	60
Health clinic or school-based health center	41.61%	57	5.11%	7	20.44%	28	32.85%	45
Mental health or counseling supports	32.37%	45	14.39%	20	15.83%	22	37.41%	52
Food access	51.43%	72	10.71%	15	2.14%	3	35.71%	50
Housing or family support services	17.78%	24	8.15%	11	11.11%	15	62.96%	85
Workforce support	12.50%	17	5.88%	8	13.24%	18	68.38%	93
Transportation assistance	20.59%	28	9.56%	13	11.03%	15	58.82%	80
Family programs	21.48%	29	9.63%	13	13.33%	18	55.56%	75
Another Program (please specify below)	9.68%	6	4.84%	3	4.84%	3	80.65%	50
							Answered	144

Q24. Would you like to provide feedback on Ready to Launch?	Percent	N
Yes	47.29%	96
No	52.71%	107
	Answered	203

Q25. Have you or a family member participated in Seattle Promise, which provides tuition and academic advising supports at Seattle Colleges?	Percent	N
Yes, as a student	3.06%	3
Yes, as a parent or family member	10.20%	10
No	81.63%	80
Not Sure	5.10%	5
	Answered	98

Q26. Overall, how satisfied were you with the Promise experience?	Percent	N
Very satisfied	40.00%	4
Satisfied	40.00%	4
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10.00%	1
Dissatisfied	10.00%	1
Very dissatisfied	0.00%	0
	Answered	10

Q27. What areas of the program worked well? Select up to 3.	Percent	N
Tuition scholarship	70.00%	7
Equity Scholarship	0.00%	0
Promise retention specialists and academic advising	30.00%	3
Seattle Colleges Faculty or non-Promise staff	40.00%	4
Promise outreach specialists who help in high schools	10.00%	1
Financial aid support	30.00%	3
	Answered	10

Q28. What could get students more excited about exploring college pathways? Select up to 3.	Percent	N
Virtual college tours	14.29%	12
In-person college campus visits)	57.14%	48
Financial aid knowledge (for example, FAFSA/WASFA)	53.57%	45
Paid internships with employers	64.29%	54
Guest speakers	23.81%	20
Financial aid & scholarships	63.10%	53
Mentorship	58.33%	49
Something Else (please specify)	9.52%	8
	Answered	84

Q29. What barriers prevent students and families in your community from accessing college? Select all that apply.	Percent	N
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I'm not sure	6.02%	5
Cost	87.95%	73
Safety concerns	9.64%	8
Location or Transportation (too far, not accessible, etc.)	22.89%	19
Hours offered do not work for schedule	16.87%	14
Language barriers	24.10%	20
Distrust of government programs	14.46%	12
Immigration concerns	18.07%	15
Assume they don't qualify	48.19%	40
Another barrier (please specify)	21.69%	18
	Answered	83

Q30. Which of the following describes your (or your student's) future college or career goals after high school? Select all that apply.		
	Percent	N
Doesn't apply to me	14.81%	12
Attend a 2-year college (non-Promise)	8.64%	7
Attend Seattle Colleges through the Seattle Promise program	24.69%	20
Attend a 4-year college	62.96%	51
Skilled/vocational training	19.75%	16
Starting working right away	4.94%	4
I'm still (or my student is) exploring my future plans	35.80%	29
Something else (please specify)	2.47%	2
	Answered	81

Q31. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:										
	Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat disagree		Strongly disagree	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
I understand the trade career opportunities available in Seattle after high school	7.59%	6	26.58%	21	21.52%	17	37.97%	30	6.33%	5
I feel confident about my (or my child's) future college or career plans	14.29%	11	27.27%	21	29.87%	23	27.27%	21	1.30%	1
I feel confident about my (or	7.79%	6	35.06%	27	16.88%	13	32.47%	25	7.79%	6

my child's) future job opportunities										
									Answered	79

Q32. What kinds of experiences would help students learn about careers in skilled trades such as welding, firefighting, auto mechanic, electrician, or construction? Select all that apply.		
	Percent	N
Mentorship	77.11%	64
Field trips to visit job sites	80.72%	67
Guest speakers	53.01%	44
Paid internships	89.16%	74
Career fairs	45.78%	38
Something else (please specify)	7.23%	6
Answered		83