

June 26, 2026

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Select Committee on the Families, Education, Preschool, and Promise (FEPP) Levy 6-Yr. Implementation and Evaluation (I&E) Plan  
**From:** Jasmine Marwaha and Traci Ratzliff, Analysts  
**Subject:** FEPP Levy I&E Plan Policy Considerations

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At its June 10 meeting, the Select Committee on the Families, Education, Preschool, and Promise (FEPP) Levy 6-Yr. Implementation and Evaluation (I&E) Plan received a presentation from the Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) on the FEPP Levy I&E Plan. The FEPP Levy supplements education services and programs, both in and out of schools, to help children and youth succeed through a continuum of investments organized around four education support services: (1) Early Childhood, (2) K-12 Student Supports, (3) K-12 Health and Safety, and (4) College and Career Supports.<sup>1</sup>

This memorandum provides background on the 2026 FEPP Levy I&E Plan, including a high-level summary, describes pre-introduction changes, and presents seven policy considerations.

### Background

In June 2025, the Council approved [Ordinance 127238](#) submitting a proposition to voters to fund education support services with a property tax levy generating approximately \$1.3 billion over a six-year period. The proposition was subsequently approved in November 2025 with support from approximately 80 percent of the voters. Section 7 of [Ordinance 127238](#) states that levy proceeds shall be spent in accordance with an I&E Plan approved by ordinance, with the following elements required to be in the I&E Plan:

1. Priority criteria, including type of educational support;
2. Methodology and process by which levy-funded strategies will be selected;
3. The procedure for regularly monitoring and evaluating overall impacts and outcomes of each of the individual investments; and
4. A summary of stakeholders consulted.

In addition, during the annual budget process in Fall 2025, Council adopted two Statements of Legislative Intent (SLIs) regarding the I&E Plan. DEEL-001S-A requests DEEL to report on how Council priorities listed in the SLI would be incorporated into the I&E Plan. DEEL-002S-A requests the department to develop specific, measurable data and outcomes for programs as part of the FEPP I&E Plan, with quarterly reports regarding activities and outcomes provided to the Chair of the Council Committee overseeing DEEL.

Council Bill 121240, transmitted by the Executive on April 29, proposes an I&E Plan intended to meet the requirements of the levy ordinance and respond to the Council SLIs. The proposed I&E Plan maintains

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<sup>1</sup> While Washington State and Seattle Public Schools are mandated by the State constitution to provide basic education to K-12 students, local governments may provide supplemental funding to support students.

the broad investment areas approved in the levy ordinance and adopted in the 2026 Budget, though they have been renamed as “domains.” Additionally, during last fall’s budget deliberations process, DEEL provided to Council cost estimate for the 6-year spending plan that served as a starting point for I&E Plan development, and the spending amounts have shifted slightly among the investment areas/domains. Table 1 illustrates these changes below.

**Table 1. Comparison of Fall 2025 Spending Plan Estimates to Proposed I&E Plan**

Fall 2025 Spending Plan Estimates		Proposed FEPP I&E Plan	
Investment Area	6-Year Total	Domain	6-Year Total
Early Childhood	\$658,244,525	Ready to Start	\$ 656,779,835
K-12 Health and Safety, K-12 Youth Supports	\$510,729,458	Ready to Learn	\$ 478,052,730
College and Career	\$82,438,948	Ready to Launch	\$ 113,042,670
Leadership and Administration	\$78,840,116	Operations	\$ 82,157,909
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,330,253,047</b>		<b>\$1,330,033,144</b>

The proposed changes to the spending plan are primarily due to the following:

- Risk Reserve changes to accommodate the new universal school meals proposal;
- Shifting certain Human Services Department (HSD) programs from Ready to Learn to Ready to Launch domain;
- Shifting some labor costs from specific domains to Operations;
- Reduction in total spending projections due to minor adjustments in labor across the levy

The FEPP I&E spending plan also reflects some changes within each domain regarding specific programs that were outlined in the Fall 2025 budget process. These changes include, but are not limited to:

- Addition of Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) Waitlist Voucher Pilot and Opportunity-Based Mentoring Program;
- Expanded Learning Opportunities splitting into “School-Based Investments” and “Community-Based Investments,” with specific requirements regarding the types of support provided;
- Mental Health staffing supports added to the School-Based Health Center program; and
- Reallocation of proposed additional Seattle Youth Employment Program funding to Police and Fire Career programs and “Path to Tech” program.

### **Changes from Transmitted I&E Plan to Introduced Version**

As noted above, the Executive transmitted the I&E Plan on April 29. The I&E Plan is expected to be introduced on June 30, and the introduced version will include significant changes to address clarity, funding details, and Council’s role. Changes include, but are not limited to:

1. *Clarification Edits.* The transmitted I&E Plan lacked complete program descriptions, reporting indicators, timelines, and evaluation expectations. The transmitted plan also included “dosage” descriptions, such as how often a community-based organization was expected to meet with a participant, that were more appropriate to be determined at the administrative level. The introduced version will have more detailed descriptions of funded programs and additional

reporting indicators, as well as provide clarity on implementation timelines and evaluations, and eliminate the dosage details.

2. *Funding Details.* The transmitted I&E Plan included a spending plan that did not always break funding down by program. The introduced version will have a line item for every funded program, and it will provide more details on spending for Council priorities, such as youth mental health.
3. *Modifications to the Plan.* In the transmitted I&E Plan, Council oversight of the plan was functionally delegated to the Executive, allowing them to modify policies and funding priorities to maintain or create alignment with equivalent County, State, and Federal programs and ensure service targets are achieved. Changes would be reported in the FEPP Levy annual report after implementation, but without advance notice to Council. The introduced version will allow some flexibility for the Executive to modify policies relating to participant eligibility, enrollment prioritization, and implementation standards, but all other policy and funding modifications will require Council approval.
4. *Underspend.* In the transmitted I&E Plan, allocation of underspend would also have been left to DEEL's discretion, with vague priorities. This is in contrast to the 2019 FEPP Levy I&E Plan, which provided very specific direction regarding the use of underspend to prioritize increasing the number of available preschool slots for three- and four-year old children. The introduced version will state that underspend allocation must be approved by Council and prioritized for evidence-based services supporting positive impacts on levy goals. Additionally, underspend may only be used to fund new or expanded programming if it can be sustained for the remaining life of the levy.

## **Policy Considerations**

### **1. New Programs to be Developed**

The I&E Plan includes two new programs that will be designed in the 2026-2027 school year and be implemented in the 2027-2028 school year. These programs are:

- SPP Waitlist Voucher Pilot, providing vouchers for preschool services for families that are unable to access the SPP program due to long waitlists; and
- Opportunity-Based Mentoring, serving students involved in, or at elevated risk of, criminal justice system involvement. Services will pair young people with trained mentors, including those with lived experience navigating the justice system and school disconnection, to provide consistent, relationship-based support anchored in school reconnection and career exploration.

While both of these programs reflect Council priorities, several questions remain about the details of implementation, including, but not limited to, how recipients for services will be chosen or prioritized. And while changes to funded services and spending plan modifications in the plan require Council approval, program elements such as implementation standards and participant eligibility can be changed by the department without prior Council approval. If

Council wishes to have more oversight of final design of these new programs, Council could require review or approval before implementation in advance of the 2027-2028 school year.

## 2. Universal School Meals

In addition to the new programs mentioned above, the I&E Plan includes a new school meals program. Of SPS's 109 schools, 56 already provide free meals to all students through federal and state funding. The Executive is proposing additional funding that will provide meals for all students, regardless of income, at the remaining 53 schools in SPS. These schools currently receive federal funding to support free and reduced-price meals for eligible low-income students, but other students must still pay. The new program will be implemented in the 2027-2028 school year and be funded for two years with funding from the Cost and Risk Reserve Funds. The estimated cost of the program is \$3.6 million in 2027 and \$4.1 million in 2028. After the initial two-year period, DEEL expects the State to fund this program with proceeds from the recently adopted Washington Senate Bill 6346, commonly known as the Millionaire's Tax, which includes funding for free K-12 school meals.

This proposal is a new Executive initiative that was not specifically identified as a Council priority during adoption of the new FEPP Levy. This proposal reduces the Cost and Risk Reserve Funds for two years to about \$642,000 in the 2026-2027 school year and \$884,000 in the 2027-2028 school year, representing a .35% average reserve for the first two years, increasing to an average of 2.5% for the final four years. In contrast, the cost assumptions presented to Council during the adoption of the FEPP Levy ordinance included a 2.5 percent risk reserve for each of the six years on average. Cost and Risk Reserve Funds are used to cover unexpected cost increases such as higher-than-expected inflation, reductions in external funding sources, and transition costs related to reducing or discontinuing programs.

In addition, long-term funding for this program is at risk given the legal challenge to the state's Millionaire's Tax. If the legal challenge is successful, or if there is not a resolution within the next two years, there will either be a dramatic drop in services to students, or pressure to continue City funding, potentially at the expense of other Council priorities.

If Council would like to provide greater protection against the risks of unexpected cost increases or a successful challenge to the Millionaire's Tax, Council could retain more funding for Cost and Risk Reserve Funds and prioritize a smaller number of schools to receive school meals funding.

Finally, while there is evidence to suggest that a universal subsidy benefiting higher-income families would also benefit food-insecure students, this program may not benefit those most in need as much as direct food assistance. If Council priorities regarding food assistance were not addressed by the Executive's universal school meals program, Council may wish to prioritize direct food assistance for students and families in need, such as providing evening and weekend meals, or expanding the summer meals program.

## 3. HSD Programs and Alignment with FEPP

The I&E Plan includes several programs that have historically been funded by and contracted through HSD. The 2026 Adopted Budget changed the fund source of these programs to the FEPP

Levy, and the programs are anticipated to undergo competitive processes at the end of their funding cycles, during the course of the FEPP Levy. These investments are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

<b>HSD Program</b>	<b>FEPP Domain</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>FEPP 6-year total</b>	<b>Planned Funding process</b>
<b>Youth Behavioral Health</b>	Ready to Learn (K-12)	High quality, clinical and non-clinical, culturally responsive services and resources addressing behavioral health barriers to participation and completion of school, training programs, and career pathways.	\$9,291,507	2027
<b>School-Based Safety</b>	Ready to Learn (K-12)	Case management services, therapeutic support, family engagement, violence interruption/ conflict mediation and deescalation services, safe passage to school.	\$30,212,376	2029
<b>Gender Based Violence (GBV) Prevention</b>	Ready to Learn (K-12)	In-school and afterschool educational programming that raises awareness around dating/sexual violence, promotes healthy relationships, increases positive support networks through adult and peer mentorship, and helps change social norms and conditions in which GBV happens.	\$3,428,256	2028
<b>Youth Development Programs</b>	Ready to Launch (Post-Secondary)	Mentoring, leadership development, college and career exploration, pre-employment and career readiness training, entrepreneurship opportunities, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math learning, and postsecondary navigation.	\$29,971,601	2027

The FEPP Levy Ordinance includes clear goals and guidelines regarding the use of levy proceeds, yet the HSD contracts were created without FEPP Levy goals in mind. And while the proposed I&E Plan contains reporting indicators for these programs to measure the success of the programs in achieving levy goals, it is unclear whether these programs as currently conceived are the best fit for levy resources.

The I&E Plan notes that the HSD programs will be re-bid at the end of their funding cycles, after assessing program performance and impact related to levy outcomes. If Council would like to provide greater oversight in this area, Council may wish to request a report from DEEL and HSD

on these assessments, and any program redesigns, before their competitive funding processes are released.

#### 4. Program Outcomes

The I&E Plan provides for a robust process to ensure continuous quality improvement of investments, with reporting indicators disaggregated by demographic characteristics. The FEPP Levy Ordinance states that an implementation principle of the levy is to “achieve levy outcomes that advance educational equity.” The evaluation framework described in Section 1 of the I&E Plan further includes the question: “To what extent, and in what ways, do FEPP investments improve educational equity, close opportunity gaps, and build a better economic future for Seattle children and youth?” However, the goals and desired outcomes within each domain in the I&E Plan are neutral when it comes to serving populations with the greatest need. The goals for FEPP-funded strategies are:

- Children are ready for Kindergarten
- Students achieve academically throughout elementary school
- Youth attend school regularly
- Children and youth demonstrate academic progress toward HS graduation at 3rd, 6th, and 9th grade milestones
- Youth start a college or credential pathway within one year of graduation
- Youth earn a degree or credential before age 26

These goals do not reference closing opportunity gaps for those populations furthest from educational milestones, as a measure of success for the levy. Council may wish to provide further direction on goals or outcomes included in the I&E Plan to reflect the desire to close opportunity gaps for those furthest from levy goals, and provide clearer consistency with the FEPP Levy Ordinance.

#### 5. Path to Trades Priorities

The I&E Plan includes funding for programs that create career awareness and provide exploration and preparation support for Seattle youth interested in careers such as public service and trades. The Path to Trades Program Expansion at Seattle Colleges, and the Path to Trades Non-Colleges program are two such programs supported by the levy. These programs will provide support for prospective students in the trades at Seattle Colleges or other state-accredited educational institutions, state-registered apprenticeship programs, or state-accredited training providers. It will offer a one-time scholarship of up to \$1,500 for tools, supplies, or other required program and professional items, as well as other financial and academic supports. Ideally, these programs will provide information, encouragement, and support to students who might be interested in City careers for which there is a demand for workers and available apprenticeship programs, such as City Light line workers, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) water pipe workers, and SPU drainage and wastewater collection workers. Additionally, careers in certain construction trades could provide job opportunities at companies participating in the City’s Priority Hire program.

If Council would like to provide further direction to DEEL regarding strengthening partnerships between the Path to Trades programs and other City departments and programs, Council could amend the I&E Plan to provide more clarity for DEEL priorities in this regard.

#### 6. School Safety Investments

The FEPP Levy includes investments to “support youth with non-punitive strategies to promote physical and emotional safety.” The I&E Plan includes funding for Restorative Practices, the new Opportunity-Based Mentoring Program described above that will serve students involved in, or at elevated risk of, criminal justice system involvement. The I&E Plan also includes existing HSD investments in School-Based Safety that have historically been supported by General Fund dollars, but that will now be levy-funded.

HSD completed a competitive funding process earlier this year that resulted in awards to six organizations to advance school-based safety, as a component of a \$14.7 million multi-pronged investment to increase community safety and reduce gun violence. These school-based awards support onsite safety teams at Seattle high schools and middle schools to provide mediation, case management, safe passage to and from school, and financial resources to support the needs of students and families.

Levy-funded school safety interventions, existing HSD awards, and the new Restorative Practices body of work, are likely to have some overlap in terms of services offered, individuals served, and desired outcomes. The I&E Plan does not include an articulation of the desire for coordinated services, or for an overarching framework to guide these investments.

If Council would like to provide direction for such a framework, Council can amend the I&E Plan to require or request a report on systems-level coordination for the totality of school safety investments, as well as other City-funded youth-focused efforts that are not explicitly framed as promoting safety or gun violence reduction, but that will nonetheless benefit from coordination with these efforts, such as behavioral health and wellness activities.

#### 7. Contextual Policy Consideration: K-12 School-Based Investments

In the I&E Plan, the Executive has modified the approach to funding School-Based Investments and services beginning in the 2027-2028 school year. In the prior levy, funding was provided to selected schools that offered specific programs and services, and those schools could choose to contract with community-based organizations and departments such as Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), to offer services.

According to DEEL, allowing FEPP-funded schools to independently determine the programs and services offered to students has shown mixed results and made it difficult to track which types of interventions are working. DEEL now plans to implement a new model for delivering services based on a national, evidence-based program called “Community Schools.” The Community Schools model is a long-term, systemic approach to education that integrates learning with social, health, and family supports. The program calls for four pillars of support: 1) academic and enrichment support, 2) integrated student supports, such as family case management and

referrals, 3) active family and community engagement, and 4) collaborative leadership and practices. Under this model, schools will still apply for funding for specific services, some of which will be delivered by community-based organizations or departments such as SPR, but their application must include interventions that advance all four pillars. A Request for Proposals process will be conducted in 2026. There is no guarantee that programs and services receiving funding under the current program will be awarded funding under this new model. This could result in reduced funding for community-based organizations that receive funding under the current program, as well as SPR’s Community Learning Center program. If SPR’s funding for Community Learning Centers are reduced from FEPP Levy, it is unclear whether another source of funding would be available to sustain the program given the projected General Fund deficit.

**Next Steps**

The upcoming schedule for Select Committee consideration of the FEPP Levy I&E Plan is shown below.

June 30 – 9:30am	Discussion of Central Staff Policy Considerations
July 8 – 9:30am	Discussion and possible vote on amendments, Final Select Committee Vote on FEPP Levy I&E Plan
July 22nd – 9:30am <i>(if necessary)</i>	Discussion and possible vote on amendments, Final Select Committee Vote on FEPP Levy I&E Plan

If a Councilmember is interested in pursuing amendments, please contact Central Staff by no later than noon on July 2, 2026. Councilmembers are strongly encouraged to engage Central Staff as soon as possible to shape potential amendments.

cc: Lish Whitson, Director  
Calvin Chow, Deputy Director