

Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee

February 2, 2023

4 – 6:00 pm

AGENDA

Charge of the Committee:

Make recommendations to the City Council on the potential design and implementation of a locally governed program to ensure universal and equitable access to early care and education for all Saint Paul children

1. Greeting (5 minutes)
2. Housekeeping (5 minutes)
 - a. Reminders:
 - For clarification, our responsibility within this committee is to make recommendations to the City Council. Recommendations can be actionable even if they do not include everything that should happen. We begin with steps in the right direction. We are not charged with creating or implementing an early learning program. We are charged with recommending a program to be designed that meets the needs of children and families of Saint Paul.
 - The design and implementation follows this committee's recommendations. The City Council will take your opinions and thoughts into consideration as it determines next steps to improve equitable early care and education for Saint Paul's young children. You are empowered to make recommendations. The answers won't always be outside this group - the answers need to come from you and your expertise.
 - b. Reminder of Norms
3. Small Group Discussion (75 minutes)
Meeting 2 questions
4. Whole Group Share Out (30 minutes)
5. Closing (5 minutes)

Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee
Group Norms

- Dedicate time to check in on norms at each meeting.
- Start on time/End on Time.
- “Step Up” & “Step Back”.
- We use “thumbs up” for group acknowledgment/to move on as a group.
- Have the conversation/ask questions inside this space.
- Be willing to ask questions.
- Respectfully disagree.
- Avoid acronyms or other uncommon terms - be willing to explain what those things are to the group.
- Gain acknowledgment before speaking - take turns when speaking or asking questions.
- Hold questions for guest speakers/panelists until they are finished speaking or presenting - write your questions down.

Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee:

Meeting Notes

4-6 pm

February 2, 2023

Attendees: Lynne Bolton, Rachel Boettcher, Eric Haugee, Halla Henderson, Mitra Jalali, Megan Jekot, Hwa Jeong Kim, LaVon Lee, Nicolee Mensing, Kristenza Nelson, Rebecca Noecker, Khalid Omar, Kera Peterson, Tracy Roscoe, Maria Scot, Brittany Trinidad Sprung, Sai Thao, Stephanie Thomas, Barb Yates

1. Greeting
2. Housekeeping
 - a. Recommendations. Not trying to create and build a program. We're making recommendations. Hoping that can free up for making conversation. Council will take these recommendations, and work on next steps.
 - b. Will write out what we do and don't agree on. We may be a little stuck in what we're doing.
3. Break-out for small group conversations
4. Large Group Share out

Question 1: Assuming the early learning funding is raised only by St. Paul taxpayers, should funding only go to families who live in St. Paul?

- Group 1:
 - Lynn feels it's disingenuous that the committee is being asked to make recommendations and not design the program. She feels the committee can't make decisions on funding without knowing how the money will be spent.
 - We had some discussion about this in the beginning of the ELLAC committee
 - This group agrees with the first question – St. Paul families paying taxes should only fund families who live in St. Paul
 - Great that county can help fill the gap to fund housing for highly mobile scholars because childcare also includes reliable housing
- Group 2
 - Clarified that the SPARK campaign is separate from this process
 - They believe the focus should be on those children that live in St. Paul and those who are homeless in Saint Paul
- Group 3
 - Different tradeoffs in different scenarios
 - Not comfortable yet agreeing on items, but had a lot of productive discussion

Question 2: How can the program make the process of finding childcare as easy as possible for families? Should the program "braid and blend" different funding types behind the scenes so

families only have to apply for funding once? What else can the program do to make finding care easy and accessible?

- Group 1
 - Finder tool one stop shop a good place to start to connect real people
 - Funding allocated to address accessibility and translation services needs
 - Workplace support includes the benefit of a resource to help ease connection
 - Building an ecosystem of care needs to be prioritized
 - Navigator tool helps create equity, but we shouldn't have just one platform; different experiences require different resources to meet need
- Group 2
 - Believe there is already a tool that does this: parentaware.org
 - Really like idea of simplifying things for parents to ensure ease of access and connection to available resources/services
 - Support the idea of a single application
 - Application should also be able to help determine if applicants are qualified for other funding/resources - maybe the application determines qualifications for all funding/resources in general
 - Use existing county/state applications as a base so we don't start from scratch
 - Single application maybe ideal across all three jurisdictions
- Group 3
 - There should be a general place where all resources are available
 - Community has a word-of-mouth system that is helpful, but expanded on to meet culturally competent outreach and need
 - How we help families find resources is important
 - Multiple funding resources
 - Central place for information not necessarily physical place – central website?
 - Lots of families seek resources through different tools/people/services - should navigators be hired? Where do they work? Training?

Question 3: Should the program prioritize funding to families who are low-income? Or should it fully cover the cost for all families, regardless of need?

- Group 1
 - Agree should cover the full cost of care for 185% below poverty
 - Don't want to perpetuate the benefits cliff
 - Families in the most need first
 - Funding scale created to help address cost of care
 - Universal access is the aspiration
- Group 2
 - Ultimate goal is to fully fund all kids 0-5
 - Make the ladder of funding/care clear – need to write out the tiers, so clear where money goes if we get more money from the state or feds.
 - Agree fully fund 185% of FPL and then sliding scale.
 - Needs to be a cost of care limit for reimbursement
 - Siblings should be included

- No firm decision on age priority: leaning 0-2 but what is going to happen to them when they are 3 and 4?
- Group 3
 - No decision on whether we're funding seats of funding children.
 - Also talked about a capping model for cost of care
 - Prioritize highest need families
 - Strong desire to prioritize other factors in qualifications, economic status not just the only qualification
 - What other factors equate high need? What is high need?

Question 4: Until we have sufficient funds to serve all children ages 0-5, how should the early learning fund prioritize its dollars? Should it first serve children only of a certain age group, with a certain level of need (e.g., less than 185% of poverty, experienced homelessness within the last 24 months, child of a teen parent, etc.)? Or should we prioritize in a different way?

- Group 1
 - Working first with 3- and 4-year old's then moving down to explore care for younger children.
 - Yes to supporting younger siblings of 3- and 4-year-olds
 - Point system could jeopardize applications of funding and qualifications; not using a point system means we could apply funding more effectively
 - Agree that a point system makes sense because it is how CCAP and ELS work.
 - Want a 0-5 continuum, but the political and economic reality of 3- and 4-year old's isn't reflected in data being used to determine programming

The group clarified that while the decision was made earlier to keep 0-5 on the table as an option, there was no vote to include 0-5 in the final decision.

The meeting was adjourned.

Small Groups – February 2nd

Group 1

Kristenza Nelson
Maggie Barnes
Barb Yates
Camila Mercado Michelli
Rachel Boettcher
Lynne Bolton
Nelsie Yang
Megan Jekot

Group 2

Rebecca Noecker
Tracy Roscoe
Eric Haugee
Halla Henderson
Sai Thao
Hwa Jeong Kim
Stephanie Thomas

Group 3

Mitra Jalali
LaVon Lee
Nicolee Mensing
Maria Scot
Khalid Omar
Kera Peterson
Briana Trinidad Sprung

Areas of Agreement

Families should be eligible to receive St. Paul early learning funding without regard to immigration status. (100% agree)

Families should be able to choose a location for care and education that best meets their needs, including St. Paul Public Schools, Head Start, licensed childcare centers and licensed family childcare. (93.3% agree)

Saint Paul early learning funding should cover whatever scheduling options families need, including year-round, full-day care. (86.7% agree)

The early care and education program should be primarily funded through a new, dedicated, public revenue source. (100% agree)

The new, dedicated revenue should supplement and not replace funding available for early learning from the state and federal government. (100% agree)

Of the local funding sources available, a special levy is the best option for funding an early learning program. (93.8% support or somewhat support)

Discussion Questions for February 2, 2023

1. Assuming the early learning funding is raised only by St. Paul taxpayers, should funding only go to families who live in St. Paul?

- *To be eligible to receive St. Paul early learning funding, families must be Saint Paul residents (73.3% agree)*

Comments:

- *I think yes but am not sure. You need voters to support this and I don't know how people will feel about their tax dollars providing care for kids who live outside the city.*
- *Want to ensure that families who are experiencing homelessness are able to participate – what would this look like for families who are currently in Saint Paul, but mobile/moving frequently.*
- *It depends what the funding source is.*

2. How can the program make the process of finding childcare as easy as possible for families? Should the program “braid and blend” different funding types behind the scenes so families only have to apply for funding once? What else can the program do to make finding care easy and accessible?

- *The program should include a finder tool and staff to help families find the right program and apply for aid. (73.3% agree)*

Comments:

- *The program should utilize already existing tools, such as parentaware.org*
- *Not sure of cost of a finder tool, families will need support/assistance but can't we use some existing hubs, programs to help with this?*
- *Are the people who provide these services city employees? At this point I don't think I support the creation of a nonprofit that will be operating with tax dollars.*
- *I agree with this if it does not take away funding from children getting care.*

3. Should the program prioritize funding to families who are low-income? Or should it fully cover the cost for all families, regardless of need?

- *St. Paul early learning funding should fully cover the cost of care for families at 185% poverty and below. Families who earn more should be subsidized on a sliding scale. (73.3% agree)*

Comments:

- *I agree with the sentiment, not sure of the cost and whether doable.*
- *I'm not an expert in this area. It seems like folks had concerns about this during the last discussion.*

- *I think there should be a sliding fee above an earning level – not sure what that is or what costs the funds can cover*
 - *Yes, and cover for families who are not meeting that number.*
4. Until we have sufficient funds to serve all children ages 0-5, how should the early learning fund prioritize its dollars? Should it first serve children only of a certain age group, with a certain level of need (e.g., less than 185% of poverty, experienced homelessness within the last 24 months, child of a teen parent, etc.)? Or should we prioritize in a different way?
- *If funding is not available for all children, the program should prioritize families with the most need. To determine need, a point system would be used. (33.3% agree)*

Under 100% of Federal Poverty Level – 1 pt
Homeless – 1 pt
Mental health diagnosis – 1 pt
Parent under 21 – 1 pt
Multilingual family – 1 pt

Comments:

- *Is this a system used by similar programs over, let's say, a lottery?*
- *There should be other considerations such as siblings.*
- *I do agree, but the categories should align with the priority areas in the early learning scholarship program to assure those funds can be leveraged to save Saint Paul taxpayers some cost.*
- *What metrics are used in similar programs?*
- *I agree, and would add that families who have children with diagnosed disabilities/IFSPs should receive a point.*
- *This is an area for further discussion for me.*
- *I think special needs should be on the list, the things on the list are important, there should be priority list developed for funding.*