



Seattle Preschool Program Process Evaluation

Case Studies of Six Seattle Preschool Program Providers



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INTRODUCTION

The city of Seattle has a history of investing in its youth, funding education-based initiatives for nearly three decades. In recent years, the city decided to invest in early learning, aspiring to eliminate school readiness gaps for children in the community by supporting their academic and social-emotional school readiness. In 2015, the city's Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) launched a demonstration phase of the Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) that aimed to meet three goals: (1) increase access to full-time preschool for three- and four-year-old children across the city; (2) ensure that the preschool program is of high quality, using research-based curriculum and offering culturally responsive, engaging, and nurturing adult-child interactions; and (3) eliminate the racially disproportionate kindergarten readiness gap.

Since the inception of the program, SPP has experienced enormous growth (Parker, 2018). It consisted of 15 classrooms serving fewer than 300 children in its first year. By 2018, the program had grown to an estimated 82 classrooms serving 1,500 children, with the addition of home based options for preschool. Further, a recent independent evaluation revealed gains in important domains of learning (math, language, and literacy) for children as well as improvements in program quality. (Nores et al., 2018)

Program Standards¹

In order to participate in SPP, children needed to be residents of Seattle and were:

- Four years old on August 31 (prior to beginning of school year of enrollment) or
- Three years old on August 31 (prior to beginning of school year of enrollment) and from families with income equal to or below 300% of federal poverty level

Providers offering the program needed to operate their SPP classrooms 180 days per year on a full day schedule (i.e., five days a week, six hours a day). Each classroom would serve up to 20 children, with a ratio of one adult for every 10 children. On average, these classrooms would be led by a) a lead teacher, holding a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a BA and state teaching credential with a P-3 endorsement, and b) an assistant teacher, holding an associate's degree in early childhood education or two years of approved coursework in early childhood education.



¹ From the Seattle Preschool Program 2017–2018 Program Manual. More detailed information can be found at https://www.seattle.gov/education/providers/funding-opportunities/spp-pathway-program-services_2017-18

Providers were expected to adhere to a number of requirements in order to be in compliance with SPP standards:

- 1 Submit staff reports, and maintain health records of enrolled children, records of observations from Teaching Strategies Gold® (TSG), as well as child individual learning plans, and information related to each child's family
- 2 Adopt an approved curriculum, either HighScope® or Creative Curriculum®
- 3 Offer health screenings, and use Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) and ASQ-SE (Socio-Emotional) and track child development through TSG observations
- 4 Participate in Early Achievers and hold a rating of Level 3 or above, which includes meeting specific threshold levels for Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)
- 5 Engage with DEEL approved and required data entry systems such as ChIPS, TSG, ASQ, CLASS and MERIT
- 6 Develop a culturally relevant plan for engaging and partnering with families
- 7 Participate in classroom assessments set by DEEL including CLASS and ECERS and conduct child assessments such as ASQ and TSG and provide data to DEEL
- 8 Participate in both agency level self-assessments and external assessments conducted by DEEL or outside entities
- 9 Have a deep understanding of Seattle Public School enrollment processes and provide families with supports and services to ensure that children successfully transition into kindergarten

Program Supports²

DEEL offered providers a variety of supports as they implemented SPP. These included professional development, which entailed a) coaching, including onsite curriculum assistance and support for teacher's professional growth, b) training including on screenings, assessments, and curriculum, and c) a scholarship program support for eligible staff working in SPP classrooms to meet SPP education standards. Support also included technical assistance support provided by education specialists such as assistance around TSG, meeting contract requirements, performance pay requirements, and adhering to program standards. DEEL also partnered with the Seattle Child Care Health program to provide ongoing health supports including mental health consultation support and health and safety assessments. Providers also had access to additional behavioral services to support children's social-emotional and behavioral development as well as professional development and coaching around developmentally appropriate curriculum resources and practices.

About the Process Evaluation

DEEL contracted with School Readiness Consulting (SRC) to conduct a process evaluation of SPP. As a culmination of this inquiry, SRC developed a report containing case studies of six SPP sites that illustrate how various types of providers (school, center, and home based) implemented program standards and experienced DEEL supports. Additionally, SRC developed a cross-site report that illustrates the shared experiences of providers as they implemented the program at their site.

² From the Seattle Preschool Program 2017–2018 Program Manual. More detailed information can be found at https://www.seattle.gov/education/providers/funding-opportunities/spp-pathway-program-services_2017-18

This evaluation addressed two research questions focusing on the themes of classroom practices and DEEL supports:

- How do SPP providers implement best practices in the areas of curriculum, classroom management, culturally responsive instructional strategies, assessment, and family engagement?
- What are SPP providers' experiences with DEEL supports in the areas of contracting and funding, application and enrollment supports, quality teaching (including culturally responsive strategies and equitable practices), and technical assistance and compliance monitoring?

The research team addressed the research questions by conducting classroom observations, interviews, and focus groups, which provided information about provider experiences with SPP. General details about the study methods can be found on page 6. More detailed information about the methodology can be found in the companion cross-site report, which highlights the collective experiences of providers that participated in the process evaluation.

About the Report

This report presents six case studies, one for each of the six sites selected to participate in the process evaluation:

- 1 **A school-based site with SPP Plus** – exploring the experiences of offering education opportunities for students with and without disabilities
- 2 **A school-based site** – illustrating the experiences of offering SPP in a traditionally K–5 setting
- 3 **A center-based site with an extended day option** – showcasing the experiences of offering preschool in community based setting
- 4 **A center-based site with Head Start offerings** – exploring the experiences of offering SPP in conjunction with Head Start
- 5 **A dual language learner (DLL)–focused center based site** – illustrating the experiences of customizing preschool for dual language learners in community based setting
- 6 **A family child care hub** – showcasing the experiences of a group of family child care providers who offer preschool in home-based settings

This report is organized into three sections:

- The first section is a glossary that provides the reader with definitions of key terms used throughout the report.
- The second section sets out general details about the study methods, with information about the sample and procedures, including the sampling, recruitment, and site visit process.
- The third section contains the six case studies, which are organized in the order listed above. Each case study contains the following:
 - A vignette, which offers a snapshot of the site
 - Program context informed by demographic data and program and classroom characteristics provided by DEEL
 - Themes regarding provider experiences in implementing best practices and program standards, and using DEEL support
 - A summary of key takeaways

GLOSSARY

ChIPS - The DEEL database system used by providers and DEEL to store and track child related data such as attendance and screening results.

Center Based - The term that references the sites offering SPP in a center setting. In some cases, the term “CBO” (community based program) is used in reference to these sites.

Dual Language - A form of bilingual education in which children gain a rich understanding of two languages through exposure to both languages through daily routines, music, books, activities, and communication.

Early Achievers - The voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for licensed child care providers in Washington that provides early learning programs with guidelines around high-quality care.

Extended Day - The hours outside of the six-hour SPP day.

Full Day - Care provided five days per week with six hours per day of classroom instruction.

Home Based - The term that references the sites offering SPP in a home setting. In some cases, the term “FCC” (family child care) provider or FCC hub is used in reference to these sites.

Inclusion - An educational opportunity that supports the education of children with varying abilities and disabilities led by both the Special Education and General Education teachers.

Inclusive - An environment that is welcoming of and seeks to integrate a multitude of identities including cultural, racial/ethnic, religious, or related to gender or ability. The environment fosters feelings of respect, acceptance and belonging.

MERIT - Managed Education and Registry Information Tool managed by the Washington State Department of Early Learning. It allows individuals who work in early child care and education to track online their education and training experience, find training by state-approved trainers, be recognized and receive awards for their professional achievements, and more.

The City - The Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) and the entity leading the Seattle Preschool Program demonstration initiative.

Teaching Strategies Gold® (TSG) - An observation-based assessment system used to assess children’s development and learning including literacy, social-emotional skills, and language acquisition.

School Based - The term that references the sites offering SPP in a school setting. In some cases, the term “SPS” (Seattle Public Schools) is used in reference to these sites.

Staff or SPP Staff Member - The individuals who participated in this process such as teachers, instructional aides, directors, assistant directors, coordinators, or Seattle public school district central staff. This term is not used to refer to any city or DEEL staff including coaches, education specialists, or DEEL administrators.

SPP Administrator or SPP Supervisor - Participants in this process evaluation who held administrative roles and/or supervise or manage teachers including directors, assistant directors, principals, coordinators, or SPS district central staff. This term is not used to refer to any DEEL staff including coaches, education specialists, or DEEL administrators.

STUDY METHODS

Sample

The research team worked in consultation with DEEL to identify a sample of six providers that exemplified the different service delivery models used in the Seattle Preschool Program. Participants included six SPP sites that met priority categories of interest identified by DEEL. These categories included service delivery model (i.e., public school, community-based organization, or family child care provider), and focus-specific models serving populations such as dual language learners and children with varying developmental needs and abilities.

Procedures

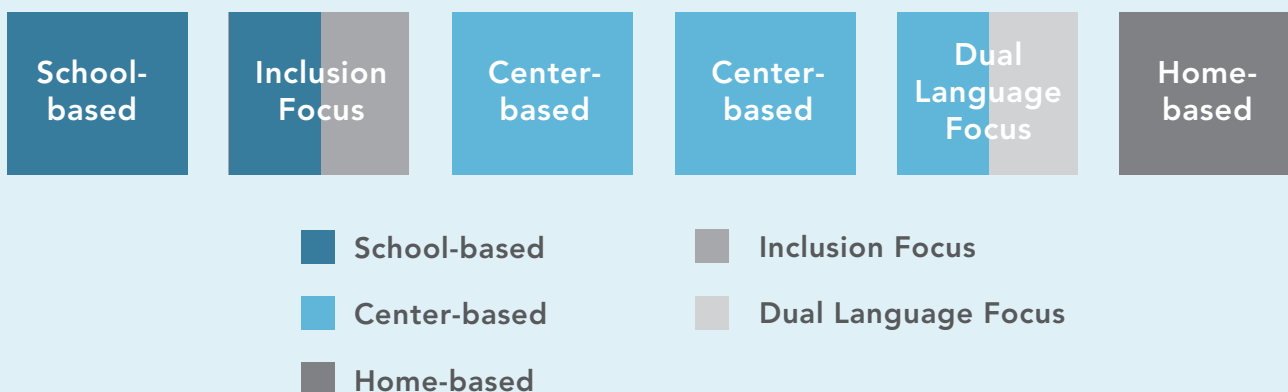
Recruitment. The research team held an informational stakeholder meeting after a required monthly SPP directors meeting. During the meeting, the research team introduced the evaluation and answered questions from site staff. At the end of the meeting, the research team distributed participation interest forms for the represented sites to complete if they were interested and willing to be selected as a site for the process evaluation in spring 2019. Additionally, DEEL staff distributed meeting materials and interest forms to sites that were not able to attend the meeting. A total of 14 sites expressed interest in participating between November 2018 and January 2019. In January, DEEL notified the interested sites that the selection process was under way and that the site would be contacted by a member of the research team. At this time, sites were also given the timeline for the study if they were selected to participate.

Sample Selection. DEEL created a list of the 14 sites interested in participating in the evaluation. DEEL reviewed site fit for the process evaluation using the priority categories of interest (i.e., service delivery model). This approach resulted in the identification of a family child care hub, an SPP Plus site, and a center-based program to be included in the evaluation (n=3). The research team reviewed the secondary characteristics the remaining sites with an eye for diversity of geographic location, child demographics (i.e., race, language, socio-economic status [SES]), and site demographics (i.e., funding). In consultation with DEEL, the remaining sample was selected: a community-based site located within a school setting, a public-school district-based site, and a site focused on dual language learners (n=3). In full, these six sites exemplified the diverse service delivery settings and models engaged in the SPP pilot initiative.

After the identification of all six sites, DEEL reached out to directors via email to notify them that their sites had been selected to participate in the case study initiative. Directors were provided with a detailed timeline for the case study process, a sample schedule of activities, and information about the reporting process. Additionally, directors were asked to assist with the coordination of introductory calls and two site visits. Sites were asked to confirm their participation within the week and were connected to a point of contact from the research team for future correspondence and coordination of the case study initiative.

Although all of the sites confirmed their participation, one site ultimately withdrew from the process due to unforeseen circumstances that impacted the program's ability to participate. DEEL worked with the research team to identify an additional site based on the priority categories of interest (i.e., SPP Plus). A new site that met the criteria was identified, but only one of the two classrooms participating in the program enrolled in the evaluation.

PARTICIPATING SITES



Site Visits. The research team conducted site visits with each participating provider in spring 2019. Site visits provided an in-depth opportunity to understand how diverse SPP providers representing different service delivery models implemented best practices and program standards and used DEEL supports. Prior to visiting the programs, the research team worked with each site to identify a liaison—a person who would serve as the primary contact person and assist with coordination of the site visits, including scheduling of and recruitment for data collection activities. The research team met with each identified liaison by either telephone or video call to learn more about the site and to begin identifying blackout dates for data collection activities. The research team conducted two site visits with each provider. In most cases, the first visit was a half-day visit (four hours) in which the research team conducted an interview with SPP administrators and an equity-focused classroom observation. The research team also conducted a one-on-one interview with a family child care provider during the first visit. The second site visit commonly lasted seven to eight hours, and generally entailed additional interviews with other administrators, another classroom observation, and a focus group with SPP and non-SPP staff. Interviews lasted approximately 75 minutes, focus groups lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, and observations lasted approximately two hours. Demographic information was collected from participants via a survey either in person or through a Google form.

Extant Data.³ In addition, the research team reviewed existing data (as of January 2019) provided by DEEL primarily to gain background knowledge and contextual information about the sites. The existing data included information on demographics, program and classroom characteristics, and program and classroom quality. Demographic data included information such as children’s race/ethnicity and socio-economic status. Program and classroom characteristic data included information such as funding sources and the number of children enrolled. Program and classroom quality data included scores from the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS), which measures program quality and scores from Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Pre-K®, which measures interactions between students and adults within a classroom.

Analysis. The research team analyzed the focus group, interview, and observation data using a deductive qualitative approach, using coding schemes informed by the research questions to guide the organization and analysis of data. Descriptive statistics were used to provide demographic information about the participants as well as to highlight potential relationships between variables. The extant data provided by DEEL was not analyzed further, but was instead simply considered during sampling and reported on occasion to help provide context within the case study report.

³ Demographic and program and classroom characteristic data informed the text and graphics in the program context sections of each case study.

AN SPP+ SITE CASE STUDY

Children are arriving for another day with their friends at preschool, located within a large public school building. Children and their families often enter through a door leading directly into the classroom, but sometimes they come through the main entrance of the school. This entrance leads into a large hallway, which contains displays of flags from various countries around the world, accompanied by pictures of children and their families. When entering the classroom, children are welcomed by a brightly colored sign featuring multiple languages. As children from many cultural and linguistic backgrounds attend this program, displays like this demonstrate the site's appreciation of its diverse student population. The preschool entry area also includes a space for families to read announcements. The classroom is spacious and includes a number of interest areas and large work tables for manipulatives and other activities. An open central area allows for easy movement around the room as well as a gathering place for large-group activities. In this space, an inviting chart hangs—children engage with it by moving their name to the space that represents their current mood or emotions. In the back corner, a door leads to the playground, which provides space and equipment for a variety of age-appropriate activities.

Before work time, staff sit down with children to discuss how they will spend their time—an essential element of the HighScope® curriculum approach. One by one, children share their ideas. Some children need a little encouragement and are prompted to draw what they would like to do. After everyone has shared, children transition to their activity of choice. Some children are quietly looking at books in the library area while, at the tables, children are seated and working together or alone with puzzles and games. In dramatic play, a small group is busy cooking, cleaning, and caring for their babies. While children engage in activities throughout the classroom, staff circulate, sometimes joining in the play or conversing one-on-one with a child. A project in the block area has spilled out into the center of the room, where a number of children are excitedly working together to build a “bridge” of large blocks on the floor. The bridge spans the length of the room, and the children who are building it are encouraging staff and other children to walk carefully to avoid falling into the lava pit or coming face-to-face with the “lava monster.”

This SPP Plus program, which offers education opportunities for students with varying needs and abilities, places a high priority on supporting the social-emotional development of all children. This is evident through the use of tools, such as a wall chart with illustrated tips and techniques like the “walk away” superpower that children can use to deal with frustration or anger. Staff have also developed some effective ways of working with children to meet their specific needs. For example, if a child is not ready to join the group at the carpet during the morning routine, teachers allow the child to participate, however the child can, from whatever space that they are. Classroom displays illustrate the importance placed on providing culturally relevant learning experiences. On one wall in the classroom, children's self-portraits hang around the book *The Color of Us*. Other examples include numerous depictions of children from various cultures and with diverse features and skin tones; a poster greeting children and visitors in five languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, Somali, and Tagalog); and, for families, a posted notice in English and Chinese announcing the formation of a family leadership committee. All these features and more make this program a place where children can feel safe exploring, learning, and connecting with others as they prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

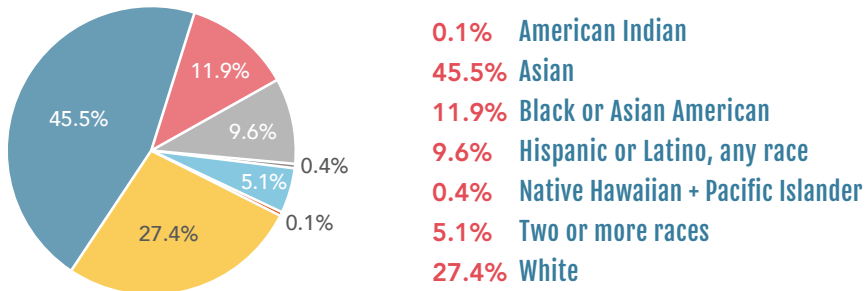


PROGRAM CONTEXT

This site provides SPP Plus, offering education opportunities for students with varying needs and abilities. The program is nestled in an elementary school and consists of two classrooms, serving almost 40 children from a variety of racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds. All of the staff that participated in the case study identify as White, and reported their native language to be English. Collectively, they have more than three decades of field experience, and the majority of them have been a part of SPP since it began at this site in 2015.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The racial and ethnic breakdown of residents in this neighborhood:



This is one of the most diverse areas in the city, with **75%** of the population identifying as a person of color

The median household income for families in this neighborhood is approximately **\$62,913**

12.7% of families in this area have income below the poverty level



61% of families in the neighborhood speak a language other than English at home

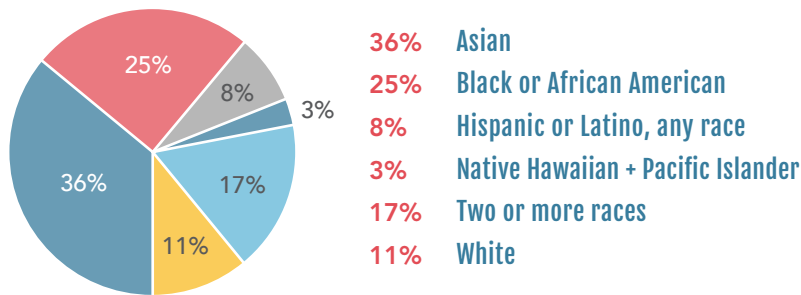
Compared to **22%** at the city level



6% OF THE POPULATION IS UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE

THE PROGRAM

The racial and ethnic breakdown of children enrolled at this SPP site:⁴



83% of children are from families with income at or less than 300% of federal poverty level

Some children speak a language other than English, including:

SPANISH & CHINESE

Seattle neighborhood profiles (<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/neighborhoods-and-districts>) and Statistical Atlas (<https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/Seattle/Overview>) provided demographic data for this graphic. The Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning provided site-level data as of January 2019.

PROVIDER EXPERIENCES

Staff from this site participated in focus groups and interviews during which they described best practices that they implemented or aspired to implement in their program or classroom and reflected on their experiences implementing SPP standards and using DEEL supports. This section of the report provides key themes from these reflections. Each theme is enclosed in a gray box below, followed by additional detail including examples in staff members' own words.

Experiences Highlighting Best Practices

During focus groups and interviews, staff shared how they implemented best practices in the areas of curriculum, classroom management, culturally responsive instructional strategies, assessment, and family engagement. The following theme of “creating a community where children can bring their whole selves” illustrates staff descriptions of these best practices.

CREATING A COMMUNITY WHERE CHILDREN CAN BRING THEIR WHOLE SELVES

Staff are intentional about building a community for the children they teach. They value the lived experiences of their students and find ways to provide a culturally responsive experience for children through a variety of methods, such as by integrating home languages into daily activities and instruction.

⁴ While only one classroom was represented in the interviews and observations, this data is reflective of all SPP classrooms at this site

Staff at this site shared a number of common approaches within the early childhood education field that support the development of young children. Across the board, their desire to provide a culturally responsive learning experience and their commitment to honor children's backgrounds and to meet them where they are stood out as fundamental elements that were woven throughout their best practices.

Staff strove to create and maintain welcoming spaces where children felt safe and knew they belonged. They believed that their daily interactions, such as the morning routine, and through classroom management techniques such as having job assignments, where each child held a responsibility for the week, helped foster feelings of safety and belonging. In addition, staff regularly used mood meters to help children identify their emotions as well as superpowers, which are abilities that children can tap into when things get tough, such as the "walk away" superpower.

Staff worked together to understand and tend to the needs of each child in their classroom. One way they did this was by considering the varying developmental or language needs of the children in their class. They frequently discussed the need to make modifications to the lesson plan set by the curriculum so that all children would be engaged and able to contribute. This site used a HighScope®, a curriculum and approach that arguably lends itself to the inclusion of a continuum of learners. Generally, staff found that the curriculum allowed them to meet all children where they were. For example, the approach provided staff with different strategies to support children with problem solving depending on their language, executive functioning, and social-emotional skills. Relatedly, staff also tailored instruction

"You want to be in some place where you really belong and where we notice if you're not there. We have a routine where we count the children every morning and we talk.... We look around the room, and we notice who's not there. We wonder where they are."

- SPP Staff Member

"[The curriculum] allows for multiple entry points. So, everybody can participate in whatever way that they're ready and able to participate, and everybody can deepen their learning. [We are] sort of starting from where they are to create an inclusive classroom ... where kids can bring as much of their whole selves into the room as much as possible."

- SPP Staff Member

as they learned about things children were doing at home with their family or based on their interests that staff learned about from a family member. Staff worked hard to plan activities that specifically and positively supported each student's growth and development and were intentional about creating experiences that affirmed children's identities. For instance, staff members encouraged children to count in their home language or other languages that the class used. These efforts demonstrated a shared value for cultural responsiveness and staff members' intentions to create an environment where, as one staff member described it, "[children] can bring their whole selves."

Staff saw families as children's first teachers and worked hard to partner with them. They engaged with families in a number of ways, including visiting homes, using newsletters and drop-off and pickup

times to stay in touch, and holding family conferences. Staff also found ways to integrate families into the classroom experience by offering opportunities for family members to volunteer, by featuring pictures of family members in the classroom, and by prompting conversations with children regarding their families.

“[I want to] support what students are already doing. Learning about math or counting at home or interests that the families have. That’s really helped me think about curriculum, how to plan for the next time.”

- SPP Staff Member

Experiences Implementing SPP Standards

To ensure that all children who participated in SPP received high-quality early childhood experiences, DEEL established a set of standards regarding aspects of programs such as curriculum, teacher qualifications, and enrollment requirements. The following themes of “establishing strategies for success” and “the impact of dual identities” are based on the experiences staff described in implementing these standards.

ESTABLISHING STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Staff work hard to adhere to the requirements of both SPP and Seattle Public Schools (SPS), while managing a classroom with children with varying needs. They believe that their success with SPP standards results from a high level of collaboration and a commitment to leveraging available resources such as time, people, and materials.

The staff at this site worked hard to adhere to SPP standards and to implement the preschool program with fidelity. Staff reported a number of strategies they used to succeed in meeting SPP standards. In many cases, SPP standards were successfully implemented because of a high level of collaboration among the staff in the classroom and due to the partnership with their SPP administrators. For instance, administrators oversaw the completion of many SPP-related administrative tasks, to allow teachers to attend to their tasks in the classroom and program, such as classroom management and lesson planning. As a result, classroom staff were able to channel their energy and focus on instruction; engaging with the children and their families; and completing tasks that inform lesson planning, such as collecting and analyz-

“I think that back-and-forth [within the team] ... lends to brainstorming, where better ideas are coming forward because multiple people are involved in working on it. I think if it were just one teacher doing that on their own, it wouldn’t be as effective or maybe as fulfilling as it is when you’re collaborating.”

- SPP Staff Member



ing data for Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TSG), an observation-based assessment system. The staff indicated that having allocated planning time, a time where they could think collectively through lessons or review data, allowed them to make relevant and timely modifications for children’s learning experiences.

In addition to collaboration, the staff took advantage of early release days,⁵ days that ended earlier in the public school system, to meet requirements such as recording attendance, planning lessons, and leveraging connections with families. They often attended trainings or a “Job-Alike” days within their professional learning communities on these days. These training sessions were specifically set aside for SPP preschool teachers to meet and share information or lessons learned with each other. Staff members also made intentional decisions such as increasing the use of small-group time or setting up video recording in an effort to maximize learning opportunities and capture high-quality data for TSG. As mentioned before, staff members also used strategies from HighScope® to aid with classroom management as well as to help foster social-emotional skills including consistently allocating time for children to plan their activities, time to work on their plans, and then the opportunity to review what they accomplished during their work time.⁶

“We have these steps for problem solving that have been helpful. ... It’s been helpful just to let students come up with the solutions even if it’s not what I would have thought of, ... kind of simplifying certain things so that kids can engage with [problems] on their own terms. ... There [are] a good amount of tools that come with the curriculum that we use on a daily basis that are helpful.”

- SPP Staff Member

THE IMPACT OF DUAL IDENTITIES

Staff at this site experience some challenges—in part as a result of working in a public school setting—including having to complete similar tasks for different entities, being observed by and receiving feedback from multiple people, and clarifying which of the public school staff expectations the site staff must adhere to and which of these expectations site staff are exempt from.

While staff at this site employed a number of strategies to meet SPP standards, they experienced some challenges, in part because they work in a school based setting. While they understood the value in each of the various requirements, staff described many requirements they had to become familiar with and execute on top of their primary task of provid-

⁵ A standard set forth by the Seattle Public School system where the school day is shortened by 75 minutes once a week.

⁶ This process is referred to as “Plan-Do-Review.”

ing meaningful experiences for the children in their classroom. For instance, a variety of observations were set to take place over the course of the year, to be completed by different people (for example, building administrators, coaches, and independent observers) with seemingly different objectives.

Staff found that having frequent visitors, not always knowing when someone was coming in, and having to receive feedback from a number of individuals could be stressful and difficult to manage. Additionally, sometimes there was duplicative work, such as having to complete two background checks to satisfy both SPS and SPP requirements. Participants expressed a desire for staff involved in SPP to also engage fully as members of the school, but sometimes competing activities prevented staff from being able to participate in schoolwide meetings and events. Generally, participants were unclear about how engaged teachers in SPP classrooms should be with public-school-related efforts and desired more explicit direction and guidance from the City. Relatedly, SPP staff were not able to take advantage of certain resources at the school, such as bilingual instructional supports, because their students were not in K–5.

“It is a bit confusing about who is assessing us. ... There [are] lots of visitors and lots of different kinds of conversations often about the same stuff. [It can] be kind of confusing about where that’s coming from or where that’s going, and then sometimes there’s not a lot of feedback.”

- SPP Staff Member

“We have early release Wednesdays. We’re expected to be doing different things at different times, sometimes with the rest of the school, sometimes within preschool, sometimes on our own. It’s been very ambiguous; it’s often like we run around, ‘What are we supposed to do today?’”

- SPP Staff Member

Experiences Using DEEL Supports

The research team asked staff about their experiences using DEEL supports. Specifically, staff described their experiences with DEEL supports in the areas of contracting and funding, application and enrollment supports, quality teaching (including culturally responsive strategies and equitable practices), and technical assistance and compliance monitoring. The following theme of leveraging DEEL supports is based on staff descriptions of these experiences.



LEVERAGING DEEL SUPPORTS

Staff appreciate support from the City in a number of areas, including the provision of curriculum, assessments, and trainings as well as support from program specialists and coaches. Staff desire advanced support related to cultural responsiveness and want to strengthen the feedback loop between DEEL and staff, particularly regarding expectations and processes.

As staff worked to implement SPP standards, they used a number of DEEL supports geared to help the program run effectively while offering high-quality learning experiences for eligible children. A program specialist was available to help support tasks such as those related to contracting and compliance monitoring. Quality teaching resources—for example, evidence-based tools such as the curriculum and assessments as well as coaches and education specialists and trainings—helped support the needs of teachers. Staff engaged with all these supports and largely found them to be useful and relevant. For instance, staff were pleased with the knowledge and attentiveness of their new coach, which contrasted with their experience with previous coaches. In addition, staff were relieved that the DEEL considered the neighborhood schools of children in their enrollment process, as this had not been their experience when offering preschool prior to becoming a part of the SPP demonstration initiative. As a result, they believed more children would have the opportunity to attend the same school from preschool through fifth grade.

Staff at this site wished to continue to deepen their knowledge, particularly wanting to build upon their knowledge of culturally responsive practice and ways to integrate that knowledge into their classroom. Staff were grateful to receive the book *The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys* but reported that at that time, there had not been any follow-up. Staff desired to delve more into this resource, especially as they worked to be not just culturally responsive but also anti-racist. Staff believed that through current resources, such as the coach or advanced training, they would be able to achieve this goal. They also valued their professional learning communities, held by their SPP supervisor and led by coaches. They believed these communities offered a great opportunity to learn together and push each other; however, staff were disappointed by the inconsistent attendance by peers



“We do some goal setting with [the coach] and our current coach does a wonderful job of like knowing the kids and knowing us and being present. When she’s in the classroom she’s helping and observing and not like on her laptop typing or anything, you know. That’s helpful.”

- SPP Staff Member

and reported that the sessions felt as if they were still in development and could benefit from a more structured agenda.

Staff expressed a desire to expand the lines of communication to help foster a deeper connection between the DEEL and site staff, which could help increase buy-in and prioritization of SPP requirements. Additionally, staff believed keeping the lines of communication open would help them gain further clarity about SPP expectations and processes, as it was not always clear who was responsible for certain tasks or where site staff should direct parents if they had unanswered questions about enrollment. Staff also felt that maintaining open communication also would facilitate an opportunity for staff to share concerns, such as perceptions of stagnant funding in spite of increasing expenses each year.

“The City [DEEL] has been a bit of an ambiguous [entity].... I would love to just have the opportunity to sit in the room with them and have some of these conversations actually but with them. It feels like this big, very disconnected sort of entity that has a lot of power over expectations around what we do. But that’s not like a mutual conversation. So, I think that when things feel hard, like I have 655 pieces of documentation that I have to do, if I knew the people at the City [DEEL] or even see their faces, it would feel better.”

- SPP Staff Member



EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTICES

SRC staff conducted two classroom observations using a qualitative reflective tool developed by SRC to examine antibias and equitable classroom practices in early learning settings. The tool promotes reflection on areas of classroom practice such as environment, interactions, language use, curriculum, and family engagement. This section provides a summary of areas of strength noted during those observations.



FOCUS AREA: Environment

The environment focus area included the materials in the environment, books, toys, dramatic play spaces, documentation of children's work, and overall classroom design.

At this site, several materials reflected and incorporated the ethnic and cultural heritage of the children in the classroom, reinforced positive images of children's ethnic and cultural groups, or both, through (1) real-life images on family pictures, posters, and calendars; and (2) play people, dolls, and puppets with varying abilities and, in some cases, representation of people of color and women in non-stereotypical occupational roles. Additionally, People Color® art supplies such as paint, coloring markers, and colored pencils were available in the classroom. Observers noted use of these supplies in a self-portrait display on the wall.

The variety of books available in this classroom was a noted strength. Books showcased people of different races and ethnicities, as well as varying family structures. Some books were available in another language or showcased key terms from a variety of cultures, like the book *Little Treasures: Endearments from Around the World*. Additionally, children had access to books that explicitly explored skin tone and identity and shared affirming messages about physical appearance.

Staff in this classroom used a variety of techniques to ensure fairness. The classroom had a community helper board that acknowledged everyone's roles and contributions to the classroom. There were two gender-neutral bathrooms, which were inherently inclusive and likely helped promote ideas of justice and fairness within the community. Additionally, the classroom contained items designed to promote children's competence with working on issues of fairness and justice, such as name cards, a mood meter, and equity sticks.





FOCUS AREA: Interactions

The interactions focus area included overall adult interactions with children in the classroom, adult responses to children's questions and curiosity about human difference, adult redirection of inaccurate information shared by children that involves superiority or oppression, non-stereotypical encouragement, and use of given names.

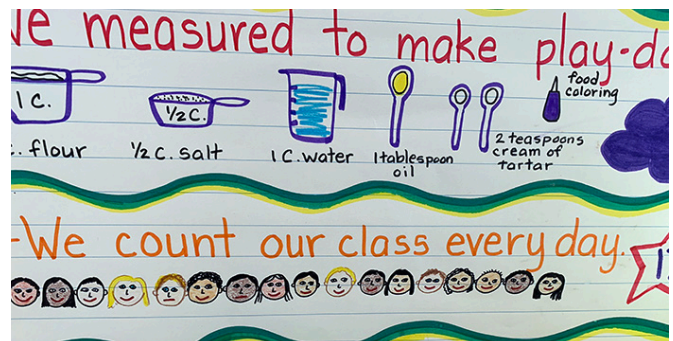
At this site, staff offered non-stereotypical encouragement, not limiting support based on a child's identity (e.g. ability, gender or racial identity, etc.) and emphasized children's strengths and contributions to their community. For example, during outside time, a staff member commented on how hard a child was working, as a child pretended to paint a house.

Staff in this classroom supported children's interests during work time, whether they wanted to build, create art, engage in physical activities such as riding a bike or playing basketball, or cook meals in the kitchen. Lastly, staff almost always used children's given names, which is a simple way to show respect and care. Observations revealed no cases of explicit bias in staff interactions with the children.



FOCUS AREA: Curriculum

The curriculum focus area included how adults help children build strong identities and how adults demonstrate respect for all children's thoughts and ideas. Elements of this focus area also included how adults incorporate children's lives outside the classroom, initiate conversations about human difference through planned activities, and encourage children to act against unfairness and stereotypes in the classroom.



Staff promoted the development of strong identity in children through routines and activities. For instance, children completed self-portraits after the class read the book *The Colors of Us*. This evidence suggested that the staff in this classroom planned activities that promoted the development of strong identity in children by focusing on physical attributes like skin color and hair. Additionally, daily activities promoted positive experiences around individual characteristics such as home language and family structure. For example, during the morning routine, a staff member acknowledged that five languages were used in the classroom and asked the children to select a language to greet each other in.

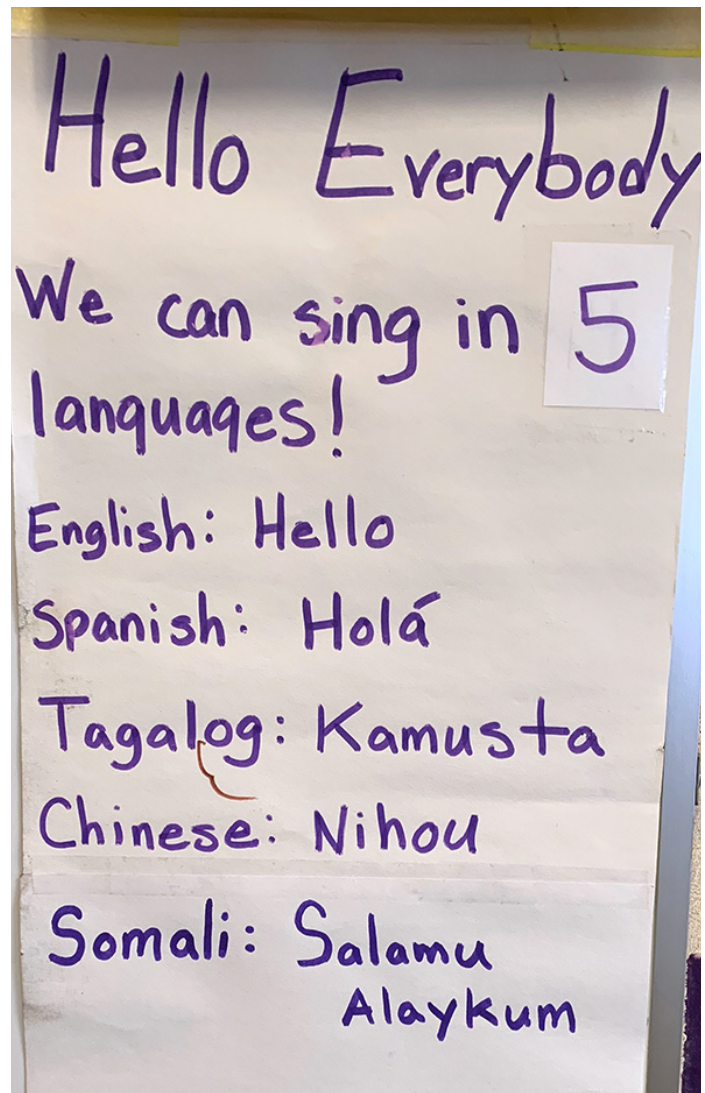
Frequently, staff made connections between what was happening in the class and children's home and family life. For example, when a staff member overheard a child state that her play people could share a room during what HighScope® calls work time, they explored with the child how the experiences of the play people were similar or different to the child's experiences. This was one example of how staff demonstrated that the experiences children and families had outside the classroom were as important as what was learned in the classroom. In general, a number of conversations and interactions in the classroom demonstrated the respect staff had for the thoughts, ideas, and participation of all the children in class.



FOCUS AREA: Language Use

The language use focus area included use of words that treat human difference with respect, use of probing and clarifying techniques to assist children, acknowledgment and validation of all children's perspectives, higher-order thinking questions asked of all children, focus on human characteristics rather than material possessions, encouragement of children to speak their home language, and encouragement of appropriate responses when children encounter unfair treatment such as if a peer skipped them while in line to play with chalk.

Staff consistently validated all children's perspectives by prompting for ideas and responses throughout the day, especially during "Plan-Do-Review" time. When a staff member worked one-on-one with one child and another child requested the staff member's attention, staff commonly acknowledged the request with, "I see you, just one second." Staff helped children develop appropriate responses when there was unfair treatment. Often, staff encouraged children to share their feelings with their peers and come to a solution together. Lastly, staff encouraged children to speak their home language, and educators learned key phrases in each child's language when possible. Further, as mentioned above, staff encouraged all the children in the class to learn key phrases in other languages and provided opportunities for children to practice throughout each day.



SUMMARY

Staff at this site describe generally positive experiences implementing SPP requirements and standards and hope to continue growing their capacity to provide high-quality early childhood experiences. A summary of key takeaways from their experiences appears below.

- 1 Staff were very thoughtful about creating an early learning experience that is **inclusive of a continuum of learners** and in which children feel safe and that they belong. Staff **valued cultural responsiveness** and intentionally wove related practices into daily routines, classroom management strategies, and family engagement efforts.
- 2 Staff understood the need for program requirements and worked hard to adhere to the standards. They utilized strategies including **collaboration and maximizing resources**, such as the evidence-based tools provided by DEEL.
- 3 Staff at this site reported being contracted with both the Seattle preschool program and SPS. This dual identity came with benefits like **access to additional professional development resources and opportunities**. This dual identity also presented challenges—for example, staff tried to **navigate conflicting or overlapping requirements and ambiguous expectations**.
- 4 Staff **appreciated DEEL-improved processes** such as enrollment and licensing, access to evidence-based curriculum and assessment tools, and the provision of quality teaching supports (for example, training and a coach). Staff members **wanted advanced support regarding culturally responsive and antiracist practices and improvements to Job-Alike days** experienced within their professional learning communities. Staff also **desired to expand communication** and the relationship between SPP staff and DEEL. Staff believed more communication would help bring clarity to expectations and processes and increase trust and buy-in.
- 5 Generally, the **classroom environment offered ample evidence of equity-focused practices**, including a variety of toys, art materials, and books. A good amount of evidence, such as the ways staff members utilized the curriculum to **initiate conversations about human characteristics** and difference, revealed strength in other equity-focused areas as well.

A SCHOOL-BASED SETTING CASE STUDY

It's a typical Wednesday morning; sunlight pours in from the large windows overlooking a snow-spotted playground. This bright, modern preschool classroom tells the story of what goes on inside—from the large open area with blocks and manipulatives; to the soft, cozy library corner; to the "Preschool Wall of Fame" displaying children's artwork. On one wall, a fresh display of children's paintings features illustrated stories of how each child spent the recent snow day. In the stillness and quiet of the early morning, the classroom and the staff wait invitingly for children to arrive.

When the time comes, children begin to fill the classroom, eager to greet staff and classmates. The children know the routine well—they store their belongings in their cubbies and choose a learning center. Before long, the classroom is abuzz with talking, laughter, and the sounds of learning. With each new arrival, the energy in the classroom seems to grow, and children move freely about, telling their stories through dialogue and play. And as they do, staff move about the classroom, preparing for the day's activities and interacting with the children.

Children hear a signal that indicates that it's time to gather on the rug for the morning meeting. Together the class take attendance, discuss the calendar and weather, and dole out—with a great sense of importance—responsibilities such as feeding the classroom fish and leading the line. They plan together for what the day will hold, and together they reengage in their current study of the human body by adding new body parts to their life-size body drawings.

To the casual onlooker, it is clear that the classroom is a friendly and engaging space where children from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds come together to play and learn each day. However, there is more to what is going on in this classroom than meets the eye. Indeed, the staff have worked to create an inclusive environment in which children can learn not only about the current topic of study but also about themselves and others. For instance, a look through the classroom library reveals a variety of multicultural books, in which children can see themselves and others represented in positive and affirming ways. A peek at the portraits children have created of themselves and their families reveals the use of a variety of media that enable them to accurately portray their skin tones, hair types, clothing, and more. In an illustrated guide on one wall, children can find strategies for resolving interpersonal challenges independently and respectfully. All these features and more make this program a place where children can grow in their sense of identity, self-efficacy, and community as they prepare for kindergarten and beyond.



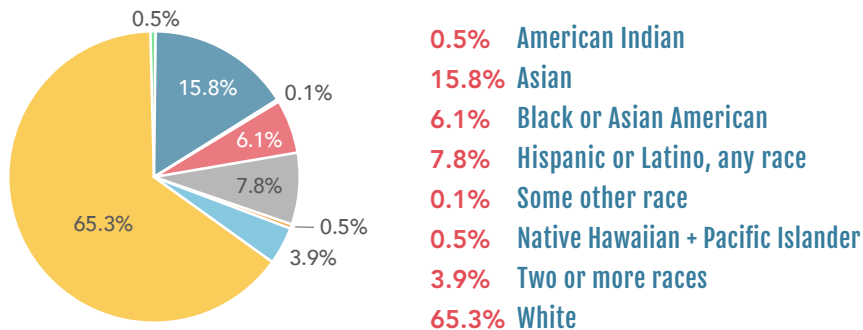
PROGRAM CONTEXT

An elementary school rich in diversity, with students representing 30 different countries, houses this site.⁷ The site serves about 20 children from different backgrounds and has designated parking spots for its pre-K staff and families. The teaching staff who participated in the case study at this site identify as White and Latino, and all reported their native language to be English. Collectively, they have more than 25 years of field experience. Those that are affiliated with the SPP program have been a part since it began at this site in 2017.



THE NEIGHBORHOOD

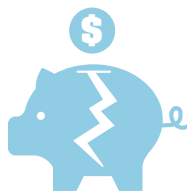
The racial and ethnic breakdown of residents in this neighborhood:



The median household income for families in this neighborhood is approximately

\$55,712

15.5% of families in this area have income below the poverty level



26% families in the neighborhood speak a language other than English at home

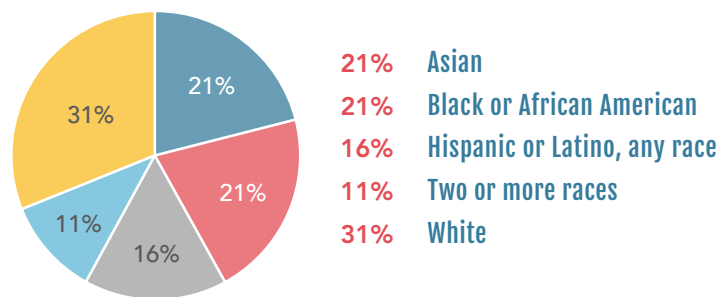
Which is on par with the number of families who speak another language across the city



⁷ https://olympichillses.seattleschools.org/about/about_olympic_hills

THE PROGRAM

The racial and ethnic breakdown of children enrolled at this SPP site:



53% of children are from families with income at or less than 300% of federal poverty level

Some children speak a language other than English:



Seattle neighborhood profiles (<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/neighborhoods-and-districts>) and Statistical Atlas (<https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/Seattle/Overview>) provided demographic data for this graphic. The Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning provided site-level data as of January 2019.

PROVIDER EXPERIENCES

Staff from this site participated in focus groups and interviews during which they reflected on their experiences implementing SPP standards and using DEEL supports and described best practices staff implemented or aspire to implement in their program or classroom. This section of the report provides key themes from these reflections. Each theme is enclosed in a gray box below, followed by additional detail including examples in staff members' own words.

Experiences Highlighting Best Practices

During focus groups and interviews, staff shared how they implemented best practices in the areas of curriculum, classroom management, culturally responsive instructional strategies, assessment, and family engagement. The following theme of “translating intentions into actions” is based on staff descriptions of these best practices.

TRANSLATING INTENTIONS INTO ACTIONS

Staff are passionate about fostering quality experiences for the children in their class. They are thoughtful in how they plan their instruction and maximize the curriculum, engage in the assessment process, manage the classroom, and interact with children and families, translating their intentions into action for the benefit of the children and families they serve.

Staff at this site were dedicated to providing a high-quality learning experience. Through a number of strategies, they developed a system to achieve this. First and foremost, staff members worked together to build connections with children and structure the educational experience based on children's interests and backgrounds. They learned about children's interests and backgrounds by talking with families and by consistently taking note of the things children were interested in during "work time," a term used with the Creative Curriculum® approach that marks the time in which children partake in an activity that they have selected for themselves. Staff worked together to track children's experiences and interests. Based on this, staff members were able to make alterations to the setting, materials, format (e.g., small group), activities, and interactions based on information staff gathered as needed. While tracking experiences and interests, staff also looked for opportunities to scaffold children's learning and made connections between present and previous lessons or activities.

"When we see kids, for example, at the block area and they're building something that's symmetrical, we'll bring up that vocabulary or it can become a math problem, like how many blocks are you using to make your structure? We don't want to disrupt their play, but we also want to point out the learning that we see."

- SPP Staff Member

Second, staff made thoughtful adjustments to processes in an effort to improve child and family experiences. For instance, staff at this site contracted with external teachers to offer enrichment activities for 45 minutes each day. This

practice also enabled staff to have planning time together. Further, as the class was not able to utilize school amenities, such as the gym and the art room, this effort filled a gap by providing exciting experiences (e.g., creative dance) for the children to partake in. Additionally, the staff at this site noticed that the report for families produced by TSG was long and contained a lot of information that was not always clear. To improve usability and relevancy, the staff tried to develop a process in which visual evidence (i.e., pictures of children or work samples) for each domain reflected in the report is provided in an effort to help families have a better understanding of their child's progress.

Staff were committed to using HighScope® and found ways for it to inform not only study lessons and activities but also the way staff members ran and managed the classroom. For instance, they regularly used the curriculum's six problem-solving strategies to help children process emotions and resolve concerns. Further, staff demonstrated their deep knowl-

"We're teaching the kids to kind of stop and [ask], 'What can I do to become my best self here?' And then we go into our strategies that we can use to succeed. So, if kids are having what we would call that meta-moment sometimes, if they would like to, they bring this [object] over here and say, 'I need some help on solving my problem.' Some kids are still learning what appropriate solutions can be, but we try to honor whatever it is."

- SPP Staff Member

edge and implementation of the approach as measured by certification as HighScope® teachers. Staff also supplemented and supported the experiences with additional resources such as a tool from a social-emotional curriculum that teaches self-regulation strategies, as well as with external enrichment activities.

Staff worked hard to maintain a space where children and families felt valued. Some ways they were able to accomplish this for their students was by displaying pictures of each child's family throughout the space and by assigning roles to children each week. Staff also learned key words spoken by dual language learners. Relatedly, staff often used interpreters or translation services to send home documents in the home languages of families. Additionally, staff tried to involve families in everyday activities, whether family members came in to just spend time, help out in the classroom, or lead an activity for a study.

Experiences Implementing SPP Standards

To ensure that all children who participated in SPP received high-quality early childhood experiences, DEEL established a set of standards regarding aspects of programs such as curriculum, teacher qualifications, and enrollment requirements. The following themes of “taking a leap of faith” and “balancing two roles” are based on the experiences staff described in implementing these standards.

TAKING A LEAP OF FAITH

Staff describe some SPP standards set forth by DEEL as familiar and easy to manage such as following a curriculum or opening the classroom to external observers. Other standards, however, present a challenge for the staff, sometimes as a result of time constraints but also because of different philosophical approaches related to curriculum and classroom management. Ultimately, staff believe that the standards, particularly those related to quality teaching, increase their awareness of gaps in their teaching practice and shift their approach to fostering quality learning experiences.

Staff at this site expressed a deep understanding of the SPP standards that DEEL put into place and believed that, as a result, they were better positioned to offer high-quality early learning experiences. For instance, being a part of SPP presented a number of opportunities to receive feedback about the environment and materials, interactions and practice, and curriculum. Staff particularly appreciated objective feedback that they received from independent observers conducting classroom observations. They saw this as an opportunity to learn about items they may have overlooked and as a good time to refine and improve. Additionally, staff reported satisfaction with HighScope®. Staff saw firsthand that using the curriculum was transformative for how they engaged children, how instruction was informed, and how they managed the classroom. However, staff acknowledged that they experienced a paradigm shift when they adopted this approach. Staff attributed this to their previous experiences of using an approach where staff (and sometimes parents) traditionally dominated instruction and management of the classroom. Once staff members were able to trust the HighScope® approach and were willing to “take a leap of faith,” they found it to be a great benefit for the whole class. Specifically, the approach allowed them to learn more about children's interests and integrate that back into the learning experience; the approach also made a difference for children's ability to make decisions, solve problems, and collaborate with one another.

“We were relinquishing our control to the children in the classroom and we were thinking, ‘Oh, my goodness, I don’t know about this.’ But we were told [by the SPP Supervisor] to take a leap of faith and give it a try, so just taking that leap was kind of our challenge. By us kind of changing our [approach], from the teacher-led curriculum and environment and letting the kids take over, it has just been magical.”

- SPP Staff Member

BALANCING TWO ROLES

Being an SPP staff member in a Seattle Public Schools (SPS) setting can come with special benefits, such as the support of SPS front office staff and access to additional professional development resources and opportunities. It can also present some challenges, such as experiencing barriers to school amenities or having to engage in duplicative processes.

Staff at this site reported that they had contracts with both SPP and SPS. As a result, staff members were engaged in a number of activities managed by each entity. While staff acknowledged the benefits of this arrangement—such as receiving assistance from on-site personnel (for example, the front office staff and principal as well as their SPP supervisor) and protected lunch and planning time during the school day—staff members also identified some challenges throughout the process. For example, staff expected that they would be able to utilize school amenities, such as the gym or the art room, with their students, but capacity issues prevented this from happening.

“When we see overlap with certain systems, ... one of the big common [questions] is why. [Staff are] always saying, ‘Why do I have to sign this quality improvement form and I’m getting a building evaluation?’ They’re worried that they’re being evaluated on the two different levels.”

- SPP Staff Member

An additional challenge for the staff at this site was their relationship to a neighboring pre-K classroom in the building that offered Head Start and was not a part of the city-wide preschool program. Staff imagined that they would be able to build community with one another and support one another with teacher practice, curriculum, assessment, and family engagement. To their dismay, the programs were quite different, as they did not use the same curriculum, had distinct experiences related to touch points with families because of differences in program structure (for example, children in the Head Start program rode the bus to and from school, while the children in the SPP program were dropped off by

family members), and operated on different schedules. These differences served as barriers to collaboration between the two classrooms, leaving SPP staff with a desire for additional opportunities for connection and community.

Moreover, staff reported having to keep up with two sets of standards and, in some cases, dealt with duplicative processes or tasks. For instance, staff felt they being were evaluated by both their city coach and their building administrator and expressed concern about having to complete similar processes with different people.

Staff deployed a few strategies to help them manage these various responsibilities, such as maximizing district required early release days for data review for TSG—an observation-based assessment system—and utilizing the help of their SPP supervisor and office staff for required SPP administrative tasks such as the management of Early Achievers requirements and attendance data entry.

Experiences Using DEEL Supports

The research team asked staff about their experiences using DEEL supports. Specifically, staff described their experiences with DEEL supports in the areas of contracting and funding, application and enrollment supports, quality teaching (including culturally responsive strategies and equitable practices), and technical assistance and compliance monitoring. The following themes of “maximizing DEEL supports” and “desiring to dive deeper” are based on staff descriptions of these experiences.

MAXIMIZING DEEL SUPPORTS

Generally, staff report positive experiences with the supports they receive from DEEL, particularly in the areas of enrollment, compliance monitoring, and technical assistance. Additionally, staff appreciate the curriculum and assessments, the training to use those tools, and professional learning communities.

DEEL offered a number of supports to staff to help them effectively run the program while offering high-quality learning experiences for the children being served. Staff members were pleased with the program specialist and other city personnel who sent reminders and answered questions.

Staff members also appreciated that DEEL handled enrollment and described

“The city [DEEL] took [SPS] school boundaries and assigned the preschool kids the same way that K–5 kids would be assigned. That’s helped a lot because [prior to SPP], kids were plopped into preschool from all over town. There was no policy for assigning them in terms of boundaries. That’s helped because kids tend to stay in Seattle Public Schools. I think [staff] feel more invested when they’re getting a kid ready for kindergarten that’s going to move up [there].”

- SPP Staff Member



“[The] training was really extensive, and I have all this paperwork and all these books and a chance to be in a room with other SPP staff during training and other people in different programs who are using [the curriculum]. Learning [the curriculum] through a few months and then being able to integrate it slowly ... was nice.”

- SPP Staff Member

the information they received from DEEL as being detailed and helpful as staff began to understand the children (and their families) in class. Additionally, they were happy that DEEL placed children at their neighborhood schools, believing this to be a win for both children and their families, as well as for the school community. As a result, more children will have the opportunity to attend the same school from preschool through fifth grade. The staff hoped, though, that their own children could be given some priority in the selection and enrollment process for SPP, which according to the staff, would be comparable to an SPS policy.

DESIRING TO DIVE DEEPER

Staff desire advanced support with curriculum and assessment tools and want to deepen their knowledge and implementation of culturally responsive practices. Staff believe this can be achieved by leveraging current resources and structures—for example, increasing opportunities for peer-to-peer connection during professional learning communities.

Evidence-based tools, such as the curriculum and trainings, were quality teaching resources offered to help support staff members' needs. Staff thought that the training for the curriculum was extensive, and they appreciated the continued touch points they had with the curriculum trainer over their first year with the tool.

Staff at this site enjoyed learning the curriculum and demonstrated their understanding of the approach by becoming certified. As they became more familiar with the method, they looked for ways to continue to learn and improve. With the understanding that other SPP staff also had this desire, this group of staff members aspired to create a 2.0 version of the curriculum training experience with one of their coaches. They planned to base the advanced training on results from a survey that they would send to other SPP staff about areas needing additional support.

Staff desired to strengthen their knowledge of culturally responsive practices and wished to expand the ways that these practices were integrated into their classroom. Staff members reported that their coach worked with them regarding cultural responsiveness, but this work generally only entailed discussions that often were not sustained because of the length of time in between visits. Further, staff believed they would benefit from more direct and hands-on support. When asked what the support could look like, one staff member shared, “Perhaps [the coach will] say, ‘Let’s take a look at more culturally responsive things in your house area.’ Or [they] could go through [that area] and write down some things that we could add. Give me some concrete stuff.”

“We’re going to put together a Survey Monkey and ask, ‘What could you use some support on with the curriculum?’ And then we’ll use this classroom, or other classrooms if they [teachers] are open to that, as the lab classroom to see [the curriculum] in action and then come back together and then make changes as we see fit for the needs of the learners, or [the staff], or the environment. We had a lot of training last year, but now we would like a dive deeper into that.”

- SPP Staff Member



EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTICES

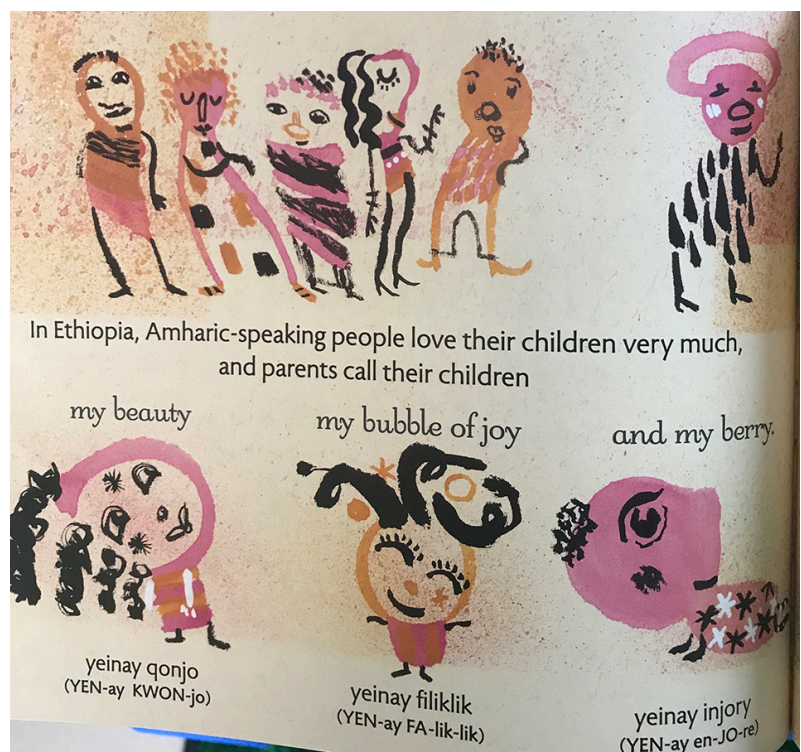
SRC staff conducted two classroom observations using a qualitative reflective tool developed by SRC to examine antibias and equitable classroom practices in early learning settings. The tool promotes reflection on areas of classroom practice such as environment, interactions, language use, curriculum, and family engagement. This section provides a summary of areas of strength noted during those observations.



FOCUS AREA: Environment

The environment focus area included the materials in the environment, books, toys, dramatic play spaces, documentation of children's work, and overall classroom design.

An array of materials reflected and incorporated the ethnic and cultural heritage of the children in the classroom and reinforced positive images of diverse backgrounds through real-life images in family pictures and posters and through representations of people living in different settings on posters and in puzzles. There were also a fair number of play people and dolls with varying skin tones and diverse abilities (e.g., a person wearing a hearing aid). Additionally, children had access to People Color® art supplies, such as colored pencils, in the art area.



The dramatic play area contained both clothing items and play food items from various cultures, such as tortillas, sushi, tofu, and sticky rice. The variety of books available in this classroom was a noted strength. Across multiple classroom libraries, children had access to books that showcased people of different races and ethnicities, family structures, and economic circumstances in a non-stereotypical manner. Further, some books, such as *Shades of People*, shared explicit and affirming messages about cultural identity.

Staff in this classroom used a variety of techniques to ensure fairness. For instance, the classroom featured visuals to show problem-solving steps, and staff engaged in the strategic use of sticks to give everyone an equal opportunity to help or participate in group discussions.



FOCUS AREA: Interactions

The interactions focus area included overall adult interactions with children in the classroom, adult responses to children's questions and curiosity about human difference, adult redirection of inaccurate information shared by children that involves superiority or oppression, non-stereotypical encouragement, and use of given names.

Staff were warm and attentive to all children, generally responding to similar behaviors in similar ways. Staff members supported children's interests during work time. Staff also emphasized children's strengths and contributions to their community. For example, during cleanup time, a staff member commented on how two children were cleaning up and working together in the process. At this site, staff used children's given names with high frequency—a simple way of showing respect and care. Further, children had access to name cards intended to help them learn how to spell one another's names. Staff also demonstrated respect for children's thoughts as children posed ideas related to human difference. When talking about physical attributes, a child shared with the teacher that her father did not have any hair. This staff member did not ignore or dismiss this comment, but instead engaged with the child without any judgment.



FOCUS AREA: Curriculum

The curriculum focus area included the ways adults help children build strong identities and the ways adults demonstrate respect for all children's thoughts and ideas. This focus area also included the ways adults incorporate children's lives outside the classroom, initiate conversations about human difference through planned activities, and encourage children to take action against unfairness and stereotypes in the classroom.

Staff were open to children's observations and questions about identity and individual characteristics, as noted in discussing the previous topic area. Staff also maximized organic opportunities to promote positive identity development. For instance, while helping a child draw a picture of a friend, a staff member asked questions to help the child construct a realistic representation of the friend: for example, "What do his eyes look like? Does your friend have a round face?"

Staff also regularly made connections between what was happening in the class and children's home and family life. These connections were apparent in activities that staff members planned, such as having children share how they spent their time outside school during a recent snowstorm. Staff also willingly engaged when children made connections between experiences in the classroom and experiences at home or with their family. In doing so, staff regularly demonstrated that the experiences children and families had outside the classroom were as important as what children learned in the classroom. Lastly, the curriculum helped nurture an inclusive learning space where staff members respected the thoughts, ideas, and participation of all the children in their class.





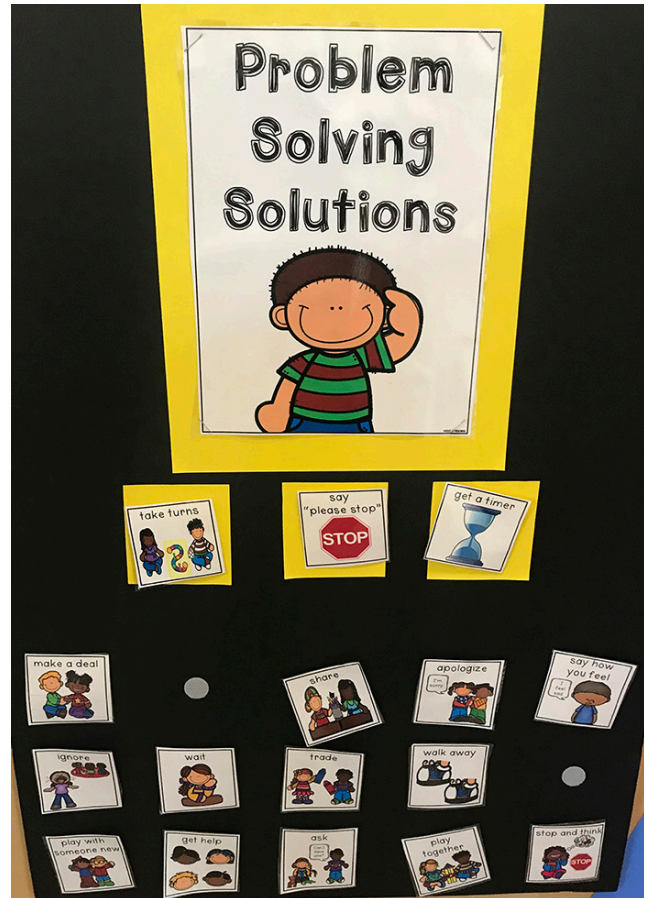
FOCUS AREA: Language Use

The language use focus area included use of words that treat human difference with respect, use of probing and clarifying techniques to assist children, acknowledgment and validation of all children’s perspectives, higher-order thinking questions asked of all children, focus on human characteristics rather than material possessions, encouragement of children to speak their home language, and encouragement of appropriate responses when children encounter unfair treatment such as if a peer was making fun of their appearance.

Staff consistently validated all children’s perspectives throughout the day. For example, while preparing for an art activity, a staff member suggested colors that the children could select and use. A child asked if it was all right to use a color that had not been named, and a staff member replied, “You can use different colors, for sure,” validating this child’s desire to do something different. In another instance, a staff member noted that M&M’S® were a treat, and a child responded that they could be a snack. The staff member honored this child’s perspective and stated, “Yes, M&M’S can be a snack or a treat.”

In addition to acknowledging and validating the diverse perspectives of the children in their class, staff focused on human characteristics and interactions—for example, staff members complimented children as they worked to clean their classroom and noted when children were working well together. Staff also made efforts to learn key phrases in different languages and showcased these languages throughout the classroom, such as with labels in these languages attached to walls indicating different areas of the room or items to engage with.

Frequently, staff helped children develop appropriate responses when someone felt unfairly treated. When there was a conflict in the block area, a staff member immediately went over to help the children resolve the issue. Questions that were asked of the children to help give them agency while addressing the concern included the following: “Do we have ideas of how you can share?” “How will you know when your turn is up?” “How do we figure out who goes first?”



SUMMARY

Staff at this site describe generally positive experiences implementing SPP requirements and standards and hope to continue growing their capacity to provide high-quality early childhood experiences. A summary of key takeaways from their experiences follows:

- 1** Staff emphasized the critical role of doing everything in their classroom **with intention**. They described all aspects of their practice—from lesson planning to interactions with children and families—as being **planned carefully**. The ultimate goal was to ensure that every aspect of their **work was meaningful and left an impact**.
- 2** Staff believed that some SPP requirements were familiar and easy to manage, while others presented more of a challenge. Challenges mainly stemmed from **differences in how to approach curriculum and classroom management**. Ultimately, staff found that standards related to teaching helped them to **better foster high-quality learning experiences for children**.

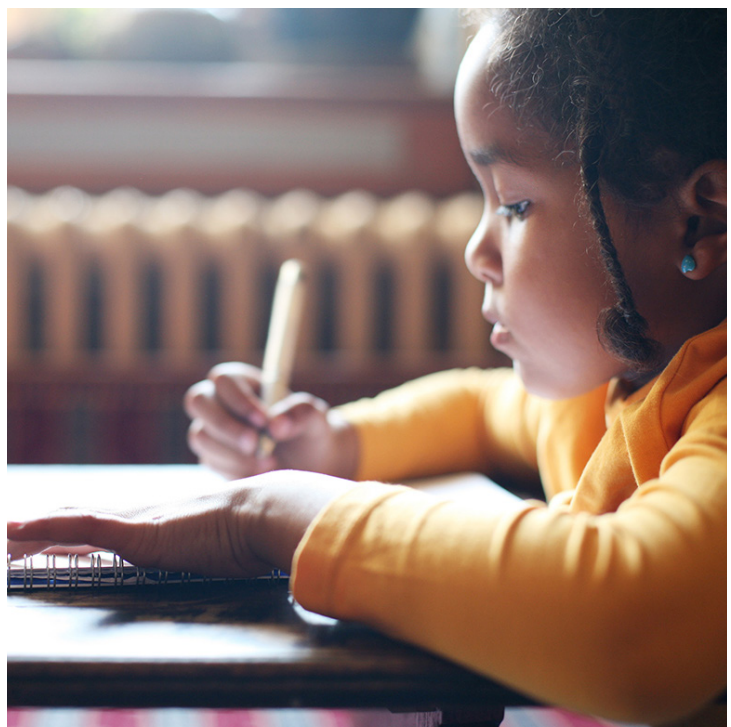
Staff shared that they often found themselves **balancing the benefits and challenges of working in a program that is both an SPP program and an SPS program**. Staff particularly appreciated the **extra support** they received from SPS, such as access to additional professional development resources and opportunities. However, staff members stated that sometimes they were **blocked from school amenities** or **experienced inefficiencies** because of overlapping or duplicative tasks.
- 3** Staff **appreciated training** related to the curriculum and assessments and the **opportunity to connect and learn from peers** in professional learning communities. Staff members also described **positive experiences with systems and supports** provided for enrollment, compliance monitoring, and technical assistance.
- 4** While staff appreciated the curriculum and assessment training they received, they also shared their **desire for advanced support** with the curriculum and assessment tools as staff members' skills grow. Staff wanted to **deepen their knowledge of culturally responsive practices** as well as implementation in the classroom.
- 5** Generally, the **classroom environment offered ample evidence of equity-focused practices**, including a variety of toys, art materials, and books. Staff also engaged in several other practices to foster equity. For example, staff members used a variety of techniques to **ensure fairness**, engage children in **conversations about human difference**, make **connections to children's lives**, and support all children in **resolving conflicts**.

A CENTER-BASED SITE WITH EXTENDED DAY CASE STUDY

The SPP classroom at this site is located in a building that resembles most elementary school buildings—with a front office reception area for families, visitors, and staff; children’s lockers lining the hallways; a gymnasium for sports and inside play (with a climbing wall!); children’s bathrooms; and a large cafeteria. Once inside the preschool classroom, however, the physical layout and environment let the visitor know that the space is designed and equipped specifically for young learners. Tall windows let a lot of natural light into the large classroom. Some children explore within clearly defined interest centers, like the block and dramatic play areas. A group of children are gathered in one of the two libraries, quietly looking at books. The teacher calls the children to the colorful rug in the center of the room, and children quickly find their names labeled on the floor, and settle in.

Children in this program are engaged in a project to learn about buildings. Displays of their work and experiences appear throughout the classroom. A small group of children have worked together to create a poster-size drawing of a skyline filled with tall buildings, and the teacher has written questions to prompt discussion. “What do we know about buildings?” she asks. “What do we want to know?” Children excitedly offer their many thoughts and answers: “Buildings are made of straw, bamboo, logs, cement ...” “Buildings are made by construction workers ...” “Buildings are made with saws, hammers, chisels, paint ...” Actual blueprints are on display for the children to examine, offering another opportunity to expand children’s learning and understanding. Examples of children’s own drawn or painted interpretations of buildings appear where children can see them. After working on their building study, children prepare for lunch. Some children are lined up to wash their hands at the sink inside the classroom. Other children are escorted by one of the teachers to wash their hands in the nearest bathroom located outside of the classroom. After lunch, each child takes responsibility for placing his or her nap mat in its designated location in the classroom and for choosing a book for quiet time. Sometimes children need a little help moving their mat and they call upon a buddy to assist.

This classroom exemplifies the best aspects of using project-based work to support learning. The teachers provide materials and prompts throughout the classroom to spur curiosity and discussion while offering children multiple opportunities for self-expression. The focus on language and literacy is evident not only in the project work but also throughout the classroom. Environmental and instructional practices, such as providing pictures that indicate the number of children who can be engaged in various interest areas and involving children in routines such as preparing for nap, all help to build the children’s sense of independence and self-sufficiency, which are essential skills for kindergarten and beyond.

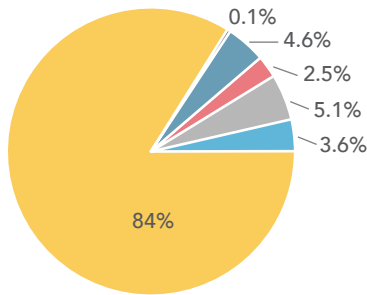


PROGRAM CONTEXT

This site operates one SPP classroom and is embedded in an old school setting that also offers non-SPP preschool programming. While it is located in a school, it is a part of a larger community based program that serves children in the community (this program will be referred to as the parent agency in the provider experiences section). The SPP classroom serves about 20 children, the majority of whom are White, but there is some ethnic and racial diversity. The staff who participated in the case study at this site identify as White, Latino, and biracial. Most reported their native language to be English with some staff reporting it to be Spanish or Slovak. Collectively, the teaching staff have more than 25 years of field experience. This is the first year this site has offered SPP programming, but the teachers involved in SPP program are familiar with aspects of the program such as the curriculum (i.e. Creative Curriculum®).

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The racial and ethnic breakdown of residents in this neighborhood:

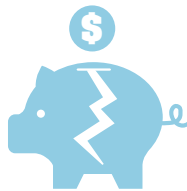


- 0.1% American Indian
- 4.6% Asian
- 2.5% Black or Asian American
- 5.1% Hispanic or Latino, any race
- 3.6% Two or more races
- 84% White



The median household income for families in this neighborhood is approximately **\$80,000**

7% of families in this area have income below the poverty level



14% of families in the neighborhood speak a language other than English at home

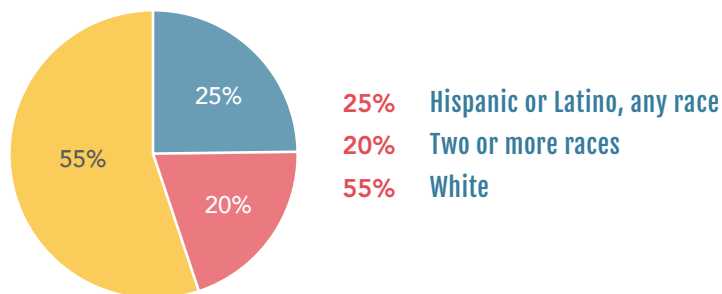
Compared to **22%** at the city level



5% OF THE POPULATION IS UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE

THE PROGRAM

The racial and ethnic breakdown of children enrolled at this SPP site:



20% of children are from families with income at or less than 300% of federal poverty level

Majority of children speak English, but teachers noted that children do speak other languages, just not fluently.



Seattle neighborhood profiles⁸ (<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/neighborhoods-and-districts>) and Statistical Atlas (<https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/Seattle/Overview>) provided demographic data for this graphic. The Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning provided site-level data as of January 2019.

⁸ The race/ethnicity percentages add up to 99.9%; these were left unaltered to reflect the data reported from the neighborhood profile.

PROVIDER EXPERIENCES

Staff from this site participated in focus groups and interviews during which they reflected on their experiences implementing SPP standards and using DEEL supports and described best practices that staff members implemented or aspire to implement in their program or classroom. This section of the report provides key themes from these reflections. Each theme is enclosed in a gray box below, followed by additional detail including examples in site staff members' own words.

Experiences Highlighting Best Practices

During focus groups and interviews, staff shared how they implemented best practices in the areas of curriculum, classroom management, culturally responsive instructional strategies, assessment, and family engagement. The following themes of “staying organized and working collaboratively,” “meeting families where they are,” and “reflecting families’ cultures in the classroom” are based on staff descriptions of these best practices.

STAYING ORGANIZED AND WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

Staff believe that detailed organization and consistent daily schedules allow them to effectively implement the curriculum. Staff also describe the importance of sharing workloads and collaborating closely, among both the teaching team and the administrators and teachers.

Staff described classroom organization and consistency as key ingredients in their ability to effectively teach. They shared that one of the biggest lessons throughout their teaching careers was knowing how to establish a daily routine and maintain it throughout the year so that students learn what to expect daily. Staff believed that this consistency helped to minimize disruptions and kept learning on track.

Staff also emphasized that to successfully implement the curriculum, it was imperative to work closely as a team in the classroom. This collaboration included splitting assessment and documentation work equally, so that no single teacher was more burdened than another. Similar collaboration was also critical between the teaching team and administrators. At this site, administrators tried to take on more clerical work, such as entering attendance into ChIPS, so that teachers could focus on their classrooms.

While staff enjoyed implementing the curriculum, they shared that it could become quite expensive because of the various materials they needed. Staff described trying to be resourceful with materials and planning ahead to make more strategic use of materials to enhance children's learning, even though staff members were not able to buy new materials for every study that they did.

"We just divvied it up. So honestly, we work in the classroom as two co-teachers would. The work is divvied. She does equal amounts. She does checkpoints, did parent-teacher conferences."

- SPP Staff Member

MEETING FAMILIES WHERE THEY ARE

Staff acknowledge that not all families are able to engage in the same ways. To meet families where they are, and overcome structural barriers of their program, staff have multiple ways they engage and communicate with families.

Staff were creative when engaging families, given some structural and physical barriers to family engagement at this site. Staff were not always able to have face-to-face interactions with families on a daily basis (though staff members wished they could), so they found other ways to keep families engaged. These practices included having families donate items to the classroom and leveraging technology such as the Tadpoles application software and email. Staff also tried to share examples of the children's work to help families feel connected to what was happening in the classroom.



“I feel that all families participate.... Some of the parents donate stuff, some of them come to the activity, some of them send their child with an extra thing. So, I think all the parents engage in certain different ways. Because, you know, parents work, so ... I feel that if they cannot come or participate physically, they bring something to the classroom or they’ll send something with the child. Or they’ll ... bring a story on another day and participate in a different way. That’s how I feel about my families.”

- SPP Staff Member

REFLECTING FAMILIES’ CULTURES IN THE CLASSROOM

Culturally responsive instruction is very important to staff at this site. They describe several efforts for ensuring that the classroom reflects the children’s backgrounds and describe the importance of leveraging families as a resource.

Staff valued equity and took several steps to make their program more equitable. Specifically, staff cited efforts to incorporate home language when appropriate,⁹ provide art materials in a variety of skin tones, incorporate books with diverse characters beyond just the curriculum offerings (by checking out books from the library), and share their own cultures with students. The most critical piece of staff members’ approach was leveraging families’ own experiences. Staff often asked families for key phrases in their child’s home language to use throughout the day. Staff also encouraged families to bring items from home into the classroom to reflect and share their culture with other children. Staff noted that they would like to continue growing in this area and receiving additional training in culturally responsive practices.

“I told the parents at our curriculum night, ‘We’re all different shapes and sizes and different cultures. Bring it into the classroom. If it’s a book, if it’s a musical instrument, if it’s a song, bring it in.’ We talk about it. We don’t celebrate holidays, but if you bring in the menorah, we’ll talk about it. You know? If you bring in a Koran, people don’t know what it is. We’ll talk about it.”

- SPP Staff Member

⁹ When families made specific requests regarding language use, such as wanting the school to primarily foster their child’s language proficiency in English (versus support their home language) staff honored and respected families’ decisions.

Experiences Implementing SPP Standards

To ensure that all children who participated in SPP received high-quality early childhood experiences, DEEL established a set of standards regarding program aspects such as curriculum, teacher qualifications, and enrollment requirements. The following themes of “balancing requirements to maximize benefits” and “overcoming physical and structural barriers” illustrate the experiences staff described in implementing these standards.

BALANCING REQUIREMENTS TO MAXIMIZE BENEFITS

Staff acknowledge that SPP has many requirements but employ several staff-developed strategies for meeting the requirements effectively, including collaboration and organization. Staff also appreciate several benefits of the program, notably an increased awareness of culturally responsive practices.

Staff shared that, to their knowledge, SPP requirements included the following: (1) having to meet several deadlines for deliverables, such as attendance and assessment; (2) allowing for observation in the classroom; (3) working with a coach on professional development; and (4) attending trainings and other professional development offerings available to staff.

To meet these requirements, staff highlighted the importance of collaboration and organization. For staff members, collaboration was key for producing the required deliverables and meeting deadlines. Teachers divided work equally among themselves, and teachers and administrators also split work, with administrators taking on more of the clerical work. In terms of staying organized, staff described a process for reviewing the contract in detail and creating internal timelines with time buffers for deliverables to ensure staff members completed tasks on time.

“Time management is very important. I learned it the hard way. ‘Oh, I can take care of that at the end of the month.’ No, you can’t. You have to start doing the things before time.... That’s why I have this [calendar], and I have it at home on my desk, and I have it in my planner, and the teachers have it. Both teachers, both centers, they know it’s expected, and I tell them.”

- SPP Staff Member

Staff cited several benefits of participating in SPP, such as a push toward more culturally relevant classroom practices, confidence gained for teachers, better time management skills, and a perceived difference in quality.

OVERCOMING PHYSICAL AND STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

Staff believe that many of the challenges they face in implementing SPP standards are likely the result of being housed in a space that is not designed for early learning and facing overlapping requirements. These challenges pose physical and structural barriers for staff members’ work.

Staff noted a few challenges in implementing SPP standards, such as struggling to implement the curriculum to the fullest due to lack of resources and struggling with balancing overlapping requirements and systems (i.e., the State of Washington, the site’s parent agency, and SPP). Staff also shared that physical aspects of the environment posed obstacles, specifically that the classroom had only one sink, the bathrooms were outside in the hallway, the park was across the parking lot from the classroom, the classroom did not have a separate door for families, and staff could not print curriculum materials on site. The issues with the sink, bathroom, and park posed daily supervision obstacles for the staff who strove to maintain the required staff-to-child ratio.

According to staff, the lack of a separate entrance in the classroom hindered daily in-person communication between the staff and families. Additionally,

since the site offered wraparound services outside of the traditional SPP time frame, it could be difficult to engage with families face to face. In many cases, families dropped off their children before the program began and picked them up after the program ended—at times when SPP staff were not on site. Lastly, not being able to print on site hindered staff members’ creativity in their practice.

“We don’t have bathrooms in the classroom. So, you can start a wonderful activity, and if someone has to go to the bathroom and your ratio is one to 10, that means 10 students have to go with and stop. They’re learning to go and then come back. That, honestly, was one of my biggest challenges when I first started here. I’m used to having bathrooms in the classroom where you can just send a child to the bathroom and monitor, but ... you interrupt the learning of the entire class to go to the bathroom because you don’t have a third teacher who could simply just take a child to the bathroom. You have to stop what you’re doing.”

- SPP Staff Member

Experiences Using DEEL Supports

The research team asked staff about their experiences using DEEL supports. Specifically, staff described their experiences with DEEL supports in the areas of contracting and funding, application and enrollment supports, quality teaching (including culturally responsive strategies and equitable practices), and technical assistance and compliance monitoring. The following themes of “advancing teaching practices” and “streamlining technical systems” are based on staff descriptions of these experiences.

ADVANCING TEACHING PRACTICES

Staff are particularly appreciative of support from DEEL related to the quality of teaching and the curriculum and hope they receive more advanced and more specific support moving forward. In some cases, however, participants shared conflicting perspectives on the effectiveness of the supports.

Generally, staff at this site highly valued coaching and training. Staff noted that at previous teaching jobs, they did not have coaching support and were looking forward to having a coach through SPP. Coaching was described as most effective when coaches conducted observations and debriefed with the staff. Staff also highly valued the training provided by DEEL and perceived it as a great resource for teachers. Staff highlighted specific features of trainings that they liked best, including how topics were responsiveness to teacher requests.

While some staff were very positive about coaching and training experiences, others described a few aspects that could improve. Specifically, some staff believed that coaching could be more effective if it were more advanced and specific, perhaps digging into the curriculum objectives and activities rather than focusing on the basics of delivering the curriculum. Staff also shared that coverage during coaching debriefs would be helpful, so conversations would not occur in the classroom itself. While staff appreciated praise, they also desired ample constructive feedback to build upon their previous knowledge of the curriculum. Regarding trainings, staff shared that they were not always able to attend trainings due to a lack of classroom coverage or inconvenient timing or location. Staff believed that improving training accessibility would make this resource even more effective.

“I wanted to get a coach for SPP. I was like, ‘That’s what I want and that’s what I need.’ Then [the coach] was just like, ‘You guys are great.’ We flat-out know the stuff we’re not doing right, but I’m like, no one ever says anything, so ...”

- SPP Staff Member

STREAMLINING TECHNICAL SYSTEMS

Staff utilize a variety of systems to meet program standards, including TSG (for assessment), ChIPS (for attendance), and Tadpoles (for family engagement) and desire streamlining and better functionality.

Staff mainly described interactions with technical systems used to capture data for TSG (an observation-based assessment system), to enter attendance, and to interact with families. Staff specifically noted that they had on several occasions encountered technical issues with ChIPS, the system used to capture attendance. Staff described cases in which the data they entered would not be visible to DEEL staff or in which absences would not be totaled correctly. Additionally, staff believed that they could work more efficiently and avoid errors if the systems overlapped in some way to avoid staff members having to enter data into multiple systems. While DEEL may not directly manage all of these systems, technical support staff may be able to gather information about limitations and report this to developers. They may also be able to help identify alternative options that are more compatible.

“I have to manually put all that in there. If the systems would speak to each other, it would make life easier for us, less time-consuming, giving us time to do other things. That is the challenge we have. The systems, they don’t all speak to each other.”

- SPP Staff Member

EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTICES

SRC staff conducted two classroom observations using a qualitative reflective tool developed by SRC to examine antibias and equitable classroom practices in early learning settings. The tool promotes reflection on areas of classroom practice such as environment, interactions, language use, curriculum, and family engagement. This section provides a summary of areas of strength noted during those observations.



FOCUS AREA: Environment

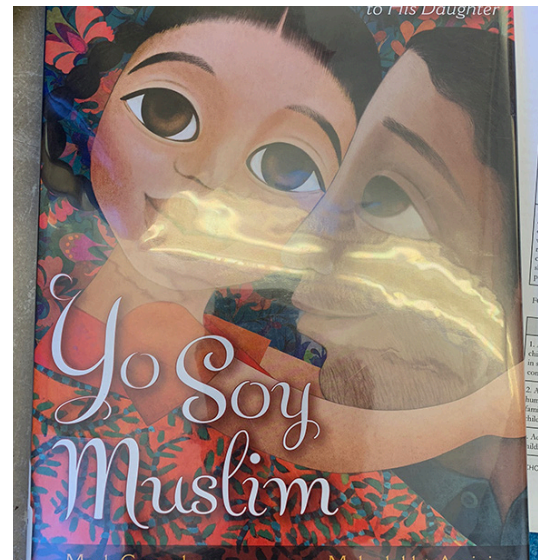
The environment focus area included the materials in the environment, books, toys, dramatic play spaces, documentation of children's work, and overall classroom design.

At this site, several toys reflected diversity, including play people and puppets with various skin tones and non-stereotypical (not stereotypical based on gender or perceived racial identity) occupations. A variety of skin tone colors were also found in the art area, where children had access to People Color® art supplies. The dramatic play area contained both clothing items and play food items from various cultures, such as tortillas, sushi, tofu, and dumplings.



The variety of books available in this classroom was a noted strength. As described earlier, staff at this site often visited the library to check out new books and rotate the classroom library to reflect lessons and current events. Books were available in various languages and reflected various gender identities, family structures, and religions.

Staff in this classroom used a variety of techniques to ensure fairness. The classroom had a jobs chart to help ensure that all children felt valued and had an opportunity to contribute in the classroom. Children also got to choose where they played during free play times and used a picture-based organization system to remind them of their choice. When conflicts arose over materials, staff members helped children develop a problem solving strategy that used timers to facilitate turn-taking.





FOCUS AREA: Interactions

The interactions focus area included overall adult interactions with children in the classroom, adult responses to children's questions and curiosity about human difference, adult redirection of inaccurate information shared by children that involves superiority or oppression, non-stereotypical encouragement, and use of given names.

Staff in this classroom encouraged all children to use the dramatic play area. Specifically, staff encouraged all children to wear dress-up clothes regardless of gender and to take on diverse roles while playing house. Staff also consistently used children's given names, which is a kind way to show care and respect. Observers did not witness staff using nicknames or pet names for children. Observations revealed no cases of explicit bias in staff interactions with the children.



FOCUS AREA: Curriculum

The curriculum focus area included how adults help children build strong identities and how adults demonstrate respect for all children's thoughts and ideas. Elements of this focus area also included how adults incorporate children's lives outside the classroom, initiate conversations about human difference through planned activities, and encourage children to act against unfairness and stereotypes in the classroom.

Staff in this classroom discussed injustice with children and invited them to brainstorm about how they could act. While the class was reading a book about Wangari Maathai, who took a stand against environmental injustice in Kenya, staff asked for children's thoughts and comments throughout the activity. After reading the book, staff engaged children in a discussion of how they could stand up for issues they care about.



FOCUS AREA: Language Use

The language use focus area included use of words that treat human difference with respect, use of probing and clarifying techniques to assist children, acknowledgment and validation of all children's perspectives, higher-order thinking questions asked of all children, focus on human characteristics rather than material possessions, encouragement of children to speak their home language, and encouragement of appropriate responses when children encounter unfair treatment such as if a peer said a negative comment towards them.

Staff validated all children's perspectives by prompting for responses during group time and specifically asking questions such as, "Who has other ideas?" Staff also commented on human characteristics versus material possessions. When a child was calmly waiting for his turn, a staff member highlighted the child's effort. Staff also helped children develop appropriate responses to unfair treatment. When a child became frustrated during lunch because the salad and milk were not being shared, she was encouraged to ask her peers to pass the items around the entire table.

SUMMARY

Staff at this site describe generally positive experiences implementing SPP standards and requirements and hope to continue growing their capacity to provide high-quality early childhood experiences. A summary of key takeaways from their experiences follows.

- 1 Staff at this site learned that their **families will engage in various ways** that work best for them. In response, staff employed **various strategies for communicating with families**, including email, the Tadpoles system, and classroom events.
- 2 **Cultural responsiveness and diversity are important** for staff at this site. Staff stocked their classroom with **materials that reflect diversity** but also see **families as critical components of culturally responsive practice**. Families are invited to share home language phrases with staff and bring in items that reflect the family's home culture. Staff noted that they want **additional training** in this area.
- 3 Staff understood the need for program requirements and developed strategies focused on **collaboration and organization** to meet these requirements. Staff also believed the program benefits them greatly, notably through an **increased awareness of culturally responsive practices**.

Many **physical and structural barriers** at this site hindered staff from providing the most high-quality experiences possible for children and their families. Offering the program in a space and context that is primarily designed for early learning could help alleviate these issues. Staff also balanced conflicting or overlapping requirements that sometimes created inefficiencies.
- 4 Staff members were confident in their ability to deliver the curriculum well and believed **detailed organization, collaboration, and consistent daily schedules** allowed them to create high-quality and effective learning experiences for children.
- 5 Staff **appreciated the coaching and training resources** but wanted to receive **more advanced curriculum-focused coaching**. They desired improved **accessibility for trainings** or **classroom coverage** so they can attend trainings. Staff also desired more **streamlining** across technical systems.
- 6 Generally, the **classroom environment offered ample evidence of equity-focused practices**, including a variety of toys, art materials, and books. Staff also encouraged all children in **non-stereotypical ways** and made efforts to incorporate multiple perspectives from children in large-group activities.

A CENTER-BASED SITE WITH HEAD START OFFERING CASE STUDY

It's Chinese New Year! Entering the building, a visitor finds evidence that a successful and delicious special event has just taken place. A warm aroma of jasmine rice cooking fills the room; bright red and yellow scraps of paper are strewn across the floor; and for those who want to relive the celebration, a video recording of the morning's festivities is playing in a corner of the atrium. As children and staff return to their classrooms, adults are beginning to clean up and chat happily, sharing anecdotes of children's reactions—especially to the surprise visit from a traditional Chinese lion and dragon!

As the day returns to normal, some children play outside on the well-equipped playground, where they are riding bicycles, climbing through tunnels, tossing balls, building and exploring in the sandbox, gathering in the playhouse, or creating colorful sidewalk chalk drawings. Inside, children enter their bright and welcoming classroom still talking excitedly about the celebration and whether they were actually afraid of the lion and the dragon. (For those who are especially intrigued, the picture book *Dragon Dance* is displayed on a low shelf along with a photo of a lion costume and an explanation of its use that staff can share with children to deepen understanding and expand learning.) As children continue to enter the classroom, staff and parents stop to chat. The director playfully shouts "Spiderman!" as a child walks to his classroom. The child stops and poses for the director, as his mother looks on smiling. There is a happy, low buzz throughout the classroom as children and staff settle easily into routines.

From the moment one steps into the program, it is clear that this school recognizes and values the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the families and children they serve. The Chinese New Year celebration demonstrates a program-wide commitment as well as the careful planning and attention to detail that conveys this message. However, looking beyond this single, high-visibility event, one sees that staff make connecting children to their own and others' cultures and lived experiences a part of their daily learning. For example, the classroom environment includes a variety of dolls, musical instruments, books, and pictures depicting various cultures as well as props and provocations to explore culture and traditions in the dramatic play area. Children's voices are captured and documented throughout the classroom in their paintings and drawings of family members dressed in colorful textiles, transcribed group conversations on topics of interest and importance to the children, and child-created illustrations of the ingredients used to make a traditional Mexican dish. In addition, materials and activities provide multiple opportunities for children to discover and demonstrate their individual and unique characteristics. From skin-colored paints for self and family portraits, to a counting chart of numbers from one to 15 in four languages, to children's names written in English and Arabic, staff ensure that each child finds connections to his or her daily life and heritage. It is clear that staff in this program provide children with the experiences they need to develop a strong self-identity and appreciation of diversity, which, undoubtedly, will leave a lasting impression for years to come.



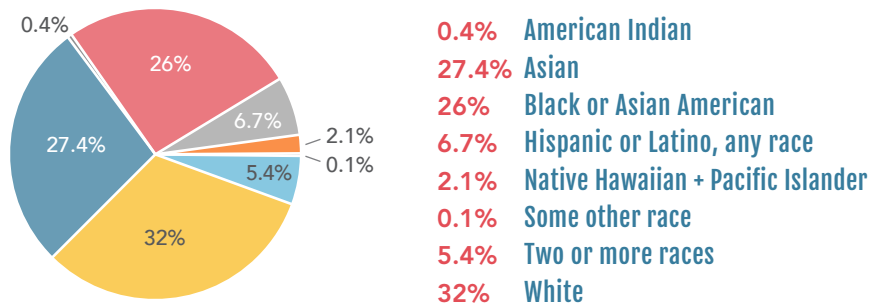
PROGRAM CONTEXT

This site operates two SPP classrooms and a non-SPP preschool classroom in its own building. It offers Head Start and extended day services. In the 2018–19 school year, about two dozen children from diverse backgrounds participated in SPP at this site. The staff who participated in the case study are also culturally diverse, identifying as Asian American, Latino, White, or with two or more racial groups. They are also linguistically diverse, reporting Arabic, Cantonese, English, Laos, and Spanish as native languages. Collectively, the teaching staff have more than seven decades of field experience. The majority of those that are affiliated with the SPP program had been involved since 2017.



THE NEIGHBORHOOD

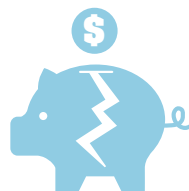
The racial and ethnic breakdown of residents in this neighborhood:



The median household income for families in this neighborhood is approximately

\$52,746

17.3% of families in this area have income below the poverty level



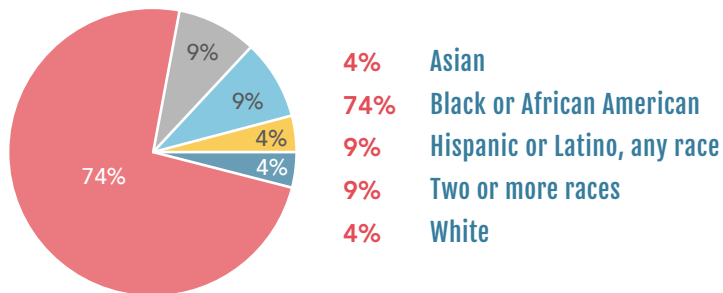
42.5% of families in the neighborhood speak a language other than English at home

Which is almost double the number of families who speak another language across the city



THE PROGRAM

The racial and ethnic breakdown of children enrolled at this SPP site:



96% of children are from families with income at or less than 300% of federal poverty level

Almost half the children speak a language other than English, with the most common language being: **AMHARIC**

Seattle neighborhood profiles (<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/neighborhoods-and-districts>)¹⁰ and Statistical Atlas (<https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/Seattle/Overview>) provided demographic data for this graphic. The Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning provided site-level data as of January 2019.

¹⁰ The race/ethnicity percentages add up to 100.1%; these were left unaltered to reflect the data reported from the neighborhood profile.

PROVIDER EXPERIENCES

Staff from this site participated in focus groups and interviews during which they reflected on their experiences implementing SPP standards and using DEEL supports and described best practices staff members implemented or aspire to implement in their program or classroom. This section of the report provides key themes from these reflections. Each theme is enclosed in a gray box below, followed by additional detail including examples in staff members' own words.

Experiences Highlighting Best Practices

During focus groups and interviews, staff shared how they implemented best practices in the areas of curriculum, classroom management, culturally responsive instructional strategies, assessment, and family engagement. The following themes, “adopting data-driven and responsive instructional practices” and “creating a culturally responsive climate,” are based on staff descriptions of these best practices.

ADOPTING DATA-DRIVEN AND RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Staff strive to offer instruction informed by children's families and based on information yielded from TSG. Additionally, staff adjust the curriculum or allow accommodations as needed by children.

Lesson planning involved an iterative process that was data-driven (i.e., using information from TSG) and combined with reflection and feedback from parents obtained through informal everyday conversations as well as formal interaction at home visits or conferences. When offering instruction, staff were flexible to the needs of the children in the class. For instance, if they noticed a child was not able to sit down or sit still, staff offered manipulatives to help with fidgeting or incorporated more active movement, such as dancing. Staff also took note of when children needed to step away from instruction or a planned activity. Children were allowed to go to the cozy corner and read or use manipulatives. Staff believed that informed and responsive instructional practices such as these helped children achieve the goals of kindergarten readiness. Teachers and administrators worked together to track children's performance and engaged families if they believed there were opportunities that family members could address at home.

“We see all the data. Maybe a kid needs to work on social skills. We use that data to add in the child’s individual plan. We use that plan to incorporate in our lesson plan. When we do the lesson plan, we make sure we work on that [skill]. During the activity, we observe them, and see how it’s going ... we see how they improve. If something not really working, then we narrow it down a bit and focus ... maybe the family really needs to work on something specific. We set that in the lesson plan and the activity. Then we do it again. It’s a big cycle to help the children to make sure they meet all the kindergarten readiness goals.”

- SPP Staff Member

CREATING A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLIMATE

Sitewide, staff believe that it is essential for children to learn about themselves and understand their identity, their family, and their home culture. Staff also foster opportunities for children to learn about people from around the world, from different communities, and with different languages and cultures.

Staff at this site strove to create an environment where all children's backgrounds were recognized and valued. They showcased their commitment to culturally responsive practices through the materials they kept in the environment, the instruction, and their everyday interactions. For example, they equipped the dramatic play area with dolls from different cultures and worked hard to keep their multicultural library stocked with books written in different languages, such as Spanish and Amharic. They used the languages of their classroom during lessons related to counting and had open conversations with families and children about their identity and cultural background.

Additionally, site-level decisions about staffing and programming further demonstrated their values regarding cultural responsiveness. Administrators at the site endeavored to hire bilingual and multilingual staff, and when possible, they enrolled children in classrooms where staff could speak their home language. When this was not possible, staff learned key phrases in home languages and obtained translation support from neighboring staff. They also planned activities that honored the heritage and traditions of different cultures, such as a celebration they hosted for Chinese New Year.

The staff credited their ability to do this successfully to input they solicited and received from families. They asked families to share ideas about ways they could improve the classroom environment and invited them to bring in things that would foster a welcoming atmosphere that feels similar to home. Further, staff strove to be culturally responsive to the families they served through their efforts to communicate with them as well as share information (for example, using translation services). They also invited in families to share their culture with the children in a variety of ways. When the program hosted a Día de los Muertos event for children and families, a family volunteered to make an altar and shared the significance with participants. Staff believed that by employing these efforts and having a family advocate, they were able to create a climate where children and families felt welcomed and supported.

“It’s all about creating the culture of the building and showing who we are. Our dream is to have each door represent a culture in this building.”

- SPP Staff Member

“It’s really about being present with the families and making sure that we’re available to talk to them when they need us. We build that relationship on day one. So, from the time you walk in for an application to the time you graduate, we hope that it’s that same experience; you feel welcome here and that your opinions and values matter to us, and we want to just provide you and your child with the best services we can.”

- SPP Staff Member

Experiences Implementing SPP Standards

To ensure that all children who participated in SPP received high-quality early childhood experiences, DEEL established a set of standards regarding aspects of programs such as curriculum, teacher qualifications, and enrollment requirements. The following themes, “managing a balancing act” and “demonstrating resourcefulness,” are based on the experiences staff described in implementing these standards.

MANAGING A BALANCING ACT

Staff note several benefits as a result of participating in SPP, including receiving a complete curriculum. However, staff must maintain requirements for both SPP and their parent agency, and they described this process as overwhelming and hard to manage given policy differences and limited time.

Staff expressed gratitude for SPP standards, including the curriculum, training, and planning time. Specifically, staff shared that SPP granted them access to an increased number of training opportunities. Additionally, SPP provided staff with a full version of Creative Curriculum®. Staff were happy to be able to continue using a curriculum they were familiar with and particularly grateful to have access to the full curriculum; prior to SPP, they had access to only some pieces of the curriculum, which staff believed limited its impact in the classroom. Staff also reported a change in having consistent planning time and said that change enabled them to have adequate time to organize lessons as guided by the curriculum as well as time to other prepare activities at the site.

Staff noted some challenges that resulted from becoming an SPP site. One major challenge was that staff still had to adhere to the requirements of their parent agency, such as operating an extended-day, wraparound program rather than a more traditional, six-hour preschool program. They described it as difficult to manage as their time was already limited and further stretched with the addition of new tasks and responsibilities for SPP. This was particularly felt when enrollment was full in the 2017–18 school year. Staff also reported that time spent completing administrative tasks consumed their free time. Ideally, they would have liked to use that for reflection or practice things they'd learned in training or discussed with their coach.

Staff noted that in the 2018–2019 year, they experienced delays with enrollment and that this also inadvertently impacted their time as the delays expanded the period of time for screenings and initial family conferences. Lastly, staff shared the difficulty in managing differing expectations received from SPP and their parent agency. For instance, staff believed as a result of their SPP coach's advocacy, that they'd been afforded additional planning time, and were grateful for the supplementary time to work on SPP requirements. However, they learned that their parent agency wanted to cut their time from five hours to three hours, and became concerned about their ability to manage their various responsibilities if that happened.



“Once [planning time] came into place, our times are being more well used. It’s not spent all just entering information for the lesson plan. We have time to enter observations, [and] pictures that we have taken. Any projects that we have going on in our class and for our wellness center, holidays, and celebrations that come up, we have time to plan and prepare for those now too.”

- SPP Staff Member

DEMONSTRATING RESOURCEFULNESS

Staff deploy several strategies, such as maximizing their co-teacher model and using resources in multiple ways, in an effort to adhere to standards and offer the finest learning experience they can provide to their students.

The staff at this site recognized the number of responsibilities and tasks that come with being a part of SPP. To succeed in meeting their responsibilities, staff leveraged the resources at their disposal, including the power of operating as a team. For example, co-teachers within a classroom worked together to make sure they collected and entered documentation for each child. Staff also helped create resource boxes to use for lessons, or studies as described by Creative Curriculum®, across the site. Specifically, as staff prepared for a new study, they took note of the materials that the curriculum called for. They then reviewed the site inventory and identified materials that they could use for the study. In some cases, resource boxes had everything that they needed, however sometimes they needed to obtain additional supplies. Whenever this happened, teachers added the new materials to the resource box, so that these items would be available to other classrooms.

“We made up these boxes so that when we make something, [we try] to get it in there. So, when you need pictures of buildings around your neighborhood, whoever’s gone out and done that, they get them printed and then put them in [the box] and you have this go-to box to use [for your study].”

- SPP Staff Member

Additionally, administrative staff established checkpoints for completion of SPP requirements and offered support to teaching staff as needed. Staff also found that they could use items such as the iPad provided by DEEL for more than one purpose; they received the iPad initially for attendance tracking but found it was also useful for documentation for TSG, an observation-based assessment system. Further, the iPad came in handy as a teaching tool; staff reported using it to support learning by locating videos and music that supplemented lessons.

Experiences Using DEEL Supports

The research team asked staff about their experiences using DEEL supports. Specifically, staff described their experiences with DEEL supports in the areas of contracting and funding, application and enrollment supports, quality teaching (including culturally responsive strategies and equitable practices), and technical assistance and compliance monitoring. The following themes, of “positive experiences with DEEL personnel” and “desires for efficiency,” are based on staff descriptions of these experiences.



POSITIVE EXPERIENCES WITH DEEL PERSONNEL

Staff at this site report positive experiences with some of DEEL supports, particularly those related to quality teaching, contracting and funding, and technical assistance and compliance monitoring. Staff identified city personnel’s positivity and willingness to help, as well as regular touch points with the coach and education specialist, as key factors in creating affirmative experiences for staff as they work to meet standards.

DEEL provided a number of supports to the staff as they implemented SPP at their site, including funding, technical assistance, coaching, and enrollment. While staff recognized the benefits of the supports, they acknowledged that the manner in which personnel engaged with them regarding SPP could have a great impact on the experience. As staff learned about SPP processes and systems, for instance, sometimes encountering challenges, staff found that city personnel were largely available to assist and were frequently positive, understanding, and supportive. For example, as staff experienced glitches in ChIPS software system used to track enrollment and attendance, they appreciated having a person to call to help them understand the issue or give status updates. Relatedly, staff members appreciated having meetings with their coach and education specialist. Staff generally found regular touch points to be a useful time to learn information, share concerns, and explore solutions. Further, these events allowed staff to learn about any issues and quickly resolve them.

“Our educational specialist meets with us, and we talk about if we’re meeting the needs of the contract. We have monthly meetings to do that. It’s helpful to check in just to make sure we’re on the same page. I would rather have a monthly check-in than someone not checking in and saying, ‘Oh, six months ago, this was missing.’”

- SPP Staff Member

DESIRES FOR EFFICIENCY

Staff note challenges they experience that relate to flaws in systems and processes. They believe that improving the enrollment system, making the Individualized Education Program (IEP)¹¹ process more efficient, and providing concrete supports for staff will better enable them to meet SPP standards and provide a quality learning experience.

While staff members largely felt supported by DEEL, they identified some areas where they believed the experience could be improved. Systems and processes related to enrollment were noted as a major pain point for this site. For instance, staff noted long wait periods for the system to update as well as data disappearing altogether, causing staff members to have to reenter information. Additionally, staff shared a belief that they were under-enrolled in the 2018–19 school year due to a system glitch that prevented the site from initially being listed as an SPP site on the SPP website. This under-enrollment caused a major concern for the site, as enrollment slots are connected to funding.



¹¹ IEPs are offered by the Seattle Public Schools Special Education Department.

Staff also noted an increase in enrolled children struggling with behavior difficulties, managing trauma, or both, particularly in their SPP classrooms. Staff reported feeling improperly prepared to meet the needs of these children, as staff are not trained in mental health or child psychology. They aspired to have access to more professional development opportunities to allow them to expand their knowledge and skills. They hoped their coach could demonstrate advanced strategies that effectively meet the needs of children with challenging behaviors, noting that methods such as the breathing strategy are not sufficient.

“There’s little glitches. And it takes quite a while for the enrollment piece to [process]. The city will say, ‘Oh, this child’s pending.’ And when you’re trying to fill spots, parents can go somewhere else if you’re [taking] too long.”

- SPP Staff Member

“We have a strategy for a basic need, and we’ve gotten past the basics. Now, we’re real deep into what we know about the child. And it’s like, we are not counselors or therapists, and we cannot touch on that subject sometimes. I wish we had that help for [the children], knowing that it’s deeper than just [saying], ‘Breathe.’”

- SPP Staff Member



Ultimately, staff did not believe they had been properly trained or qualified to work with children who exhibit intense behaviors. Further, staff worried about their ability to meet the needs of all children in the class while frequently managing challenging behavior. Staff members discussed obtaining concrete support with their coach and education specialist and unfortunately experienced delays in receiving tangible help, such as being able to meet with mental health counselors or having IEP paperwork processed. Staff hoped this process could be refined, as they believed the addition of a mental health or trauma-focused consultant and an improved IEP process could more appropriately and efficiently address the needs of the children.

EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTICES

SRC staff conducted two classroom observations using a qualitative reflective tool developed by SRC to examine antibias and equitable classroom practices in early learning settings. The tool promotes reflection on areas of classroom practice such as environment, interactions, language use, curriculum, and family engagement. This section provides a summary of areas of strength noted during those observations.



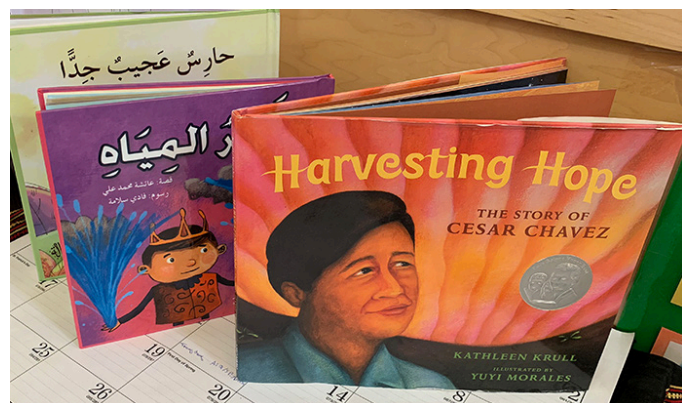
FOCUS AREA: Environment

The environment focus area included the materials in the environment, books, toys, dramatic play spaces, documentation of children's work, and overall classroom design.

A variety of materials reflected and incorporated the ethnic and cultural heritage of the children in the classroom and reinforced positive images of diverse backgrounds and people living in different settings. Almost all the walls of the room and some books exhibited real-life images. Recipes from different cultures were spread out throughout the space. Various displays focused on writing and counting featured the home languages of the children. Further, children had access to People Color® art supplies, such as paint, in the art area. Additionally, there was an abundance of play people and dolls with varying skin tones and diverse abilities (for example, a child with a walker).

The dramatic play area contained both clothing items and play food items, such as tacos, tea, rice, and fruit, from an array of cultures. In addition, children had access to musical instruments from a number of cultures. The assortment of books available in this classroom was a noted strength. Children had access to books that showcased people of different races and ethnicities, religions, gender identities, and abilities in a non-stereotypical manner. Several of these books were written solely in a language other than English or in English and another language. Additionally, many of these books conveyed explicit messages about being yourself or the beauty in difference, such as the book *The Princess Boy*.

Staff in this classroom used a variety of techniques to ensure fairness. For instance, staff utilized a problem-solving binder, which contained problem-solving steps that staff members could reference with the children. An expectation chart displayed in the classroom helped set the tone for being kind and fair with one another.





FOCUS AREA: Interactions

The interactions focus area included overall adult interactions with children in the classroom, adult responses to children's questions and curiosity about human difference, adult redirection of inaccurate information shared by children that involves superiority or oppression, non-stereotypical encouragement, and use of given names.

Staff were warm and attentive to all children, responding to comparable behaviors in similar ways. Relatedly, staff gave all children free range in selecting their activities during choice time. Staff emphasized children's strengths and contributions to their community. For example, while spending time on the playground, a staff member highlighted a child's effort to keep the area clean as she swept wood chips off the sidewalk. Staff and children talked about different human characteristics, such as hair. In one instance, a child decided to draw a picture of one of the staff members. The staff member noted that her hair was the color purple. She further engaged the student by following up with, "What color is your hair?" Lastly, staff at this site frequently used children's given names, which is a simple way of showing respect and care.

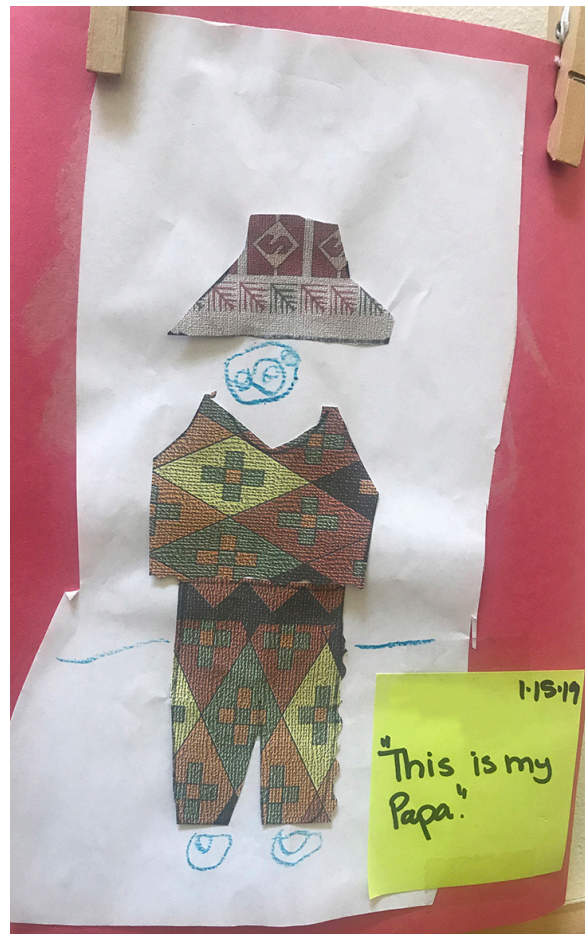


FOCUS AREA: Curriculum

The curriculum focus area included how adults help children build strong identities and how adults demonstrate respect for all children's thoughts and ideas. Elements of this focus area also included how adults incorporate children's lives outside the classroom, initiate conversations about human difference through planned activities, and encourage children to act against unfairness and stereotypes in the classroom.

Displays around the room demonstrated that staff fostered opportunities for children to discuss their family and their life outside the program during their time in class together. For instance, posters showcased children's responses to prompts such as "Does anyone in your family wear a uniform to work?" Relatedly, one wall featured a display of pictures of family members wearing different fashions.

Although observers did not witness any conversations about human difference during planned activities, observers did see materials throughout the classroom suggesting that these conversations happen. In addition to People Color® art supplies and books that showcased the experiences of children of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, a poster noted different skin tones. This poster also shared affirming messages as well as calls to action to love each other and live in harmony.





FOCUS AREA: Language Use

The language use focus area included use of words that treat human difference with respect, use of probing and clarifying techniques to assist children, acknowledgment and validation of all children’s perspectives, higher-order thinking questions asked of all children, focus on human characteristics rather than material possessions, encouragement of children to speak their home language, and encouragement of appropriate responses when children encounter unfair treatment such as if a peer skipped a child while in line to play with chalk.

Count With Us In...			
Numbers	Kuteroch	Amharic	Bitang
English			Spanish
1. One	Ande	አንድ	1. Uno
2. Two	Hulet	ሁለት	2. Dos
3. Three	Soset	ሶስት	3. Tres
4. Four	Arat	አራት	4. Cuatro
5. Five	Amest	አምስት	5. Cinco
6. Six	Sedest	ስድስት	6. Seis
7. Seven	Sebat	ሰባት	7. Siete
8. Eight	Sement	ገምገማት	8. Ocho
9. Nine	Zetge	ጠቅላይ	9. Nueve
10. Ten	Aser	አስር	10. Diez
			Tagalog
			1. Isa
			2. Dalawa
			3. Tatlo
			4. Apat
			5. Lima
			6. Anim
			7. Pito
			8. Walo
			9. Siyam
			10. Sampu

Staff consistently focused on human characteristics and interactions, such as noting how patient a child was being while waiting for a turn or remarking on a child’s ability to recall something she had done before: “[She] has a memory like an elephant!” Frequently, staff helped children develop appropriate responses when someone felt unfairly treated. A common approach was to remind children to use their words to explain what was bothering them or to share what they needed.

Staff at this site strove to foster an environment where children could speak their home language comfortably. When possible, they placed children in classrooms where staff spoke their language (e.g., Spanish or Amharic). However, all staff made efforts to learn key phrases in different languages. Staff also showcased these languages throughout the classroom—for example, through displayed activities and labels explaining the names of different items in the room in different languages.

SUMMARY

Staff at this site described generally positive experiences implementing SPP requirements and standards and hope to continue growing their capacity to provide high-quality early childhood experiences. A summary of key takeaways from their experiences follows.

- 1 Staff were very thoughtful about creating an early learning experience that is **data-driven and responsive** to the needs of the children in the classroom. Staff members used a variety of resources, including **family perspectives**, to inform individual plans for students.
- 2 Staff were committed to **honoring the identities and backgrounds of each child**. Staff intentionally demonstrated their **culturally responsive practice** through the **environment, instruction, staffing**, and **sitewide programming**, as well as through **everyday interactions with children and their families**.
- 3 Staff strove to adhere to expectations and standards from both their parent agency and SPP. They worked hard to **balance the various tasks and responsibilities** expected of them, despite **conflicting expectations** around planning time and overall **limited time** to complete requirements.
- 4 Staff demonstrated their **resourcefulness** through strategies such as **collaboration and maximizing resources**. This resourcefulness surfaced in a number of areas, including **SPP administrative work, lesson planning, assessment**, and **family engagement**.
- 5 The **understanding** demeanor that city personnel exhibited when providing supports **positively influenced** the experience staff have with city supports. Additionally, staff found that time to **regularly connect** with coaches and education specialists was **meaningful** and **productive**.
- 6 **Inefficiencies** in some supports, such as the enrollment process and system, presented **major challenges** for staff at this site. Further, staff desired **advanced support** for **classroom management, trauma**, and **challenging behaviors** through **quality teaching supports**, as well as from **mental health and trauma-focused professionals**.
- 7 The classroom environment offered **ample evidence of equity-focused practices**, including a variety of toys, art materials, and books. There was also evidence that staff attended to the focus area of **language use**, including in the way that staff members **foster opportunities** for **children to speak in their home language**. Staff also engaged in several other practices to foster equity, such as having **conversations with children about human characteristics** and making **connections to children's lives**.

A CENTER-BASED SITE FOCUSED ON DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS CASE STUDY

Walking into this site, one has an immediate sense of warmth and welcoming and of being in a place designed for both children and families. Comfortable couches and a coffee table at the entrance provide a spot for families to sit and chat. Displays and artifacts on the walls of this dual language focused program reflect the high value placed on creating learning spaces that focus on equity and cultural relevancy and are child-centered. From the many self-portraits of children to the whimsical compositions of found objects and papier-mâché hands crafted in various tones, the entrance is a window on the learning that takes place in this building.

Once in the classroom, sunlight from large windows and lighting from lamps eliminates the need for harsh overhead lights. Against the wall is a tall wooden loft that, once atop, affords children the perfect view of the hustle and bustle in the entrance and lobby area. The walls are colored in warm earth tones and adorned with children’s work, often using familiar materials such as beads and string. On one wall, staff have carefully displayed a series of self-portraits with an explanation, written in both Spanish and English, that these paintings were created after reading the book *The Color of Us*. Children experiment with paints to create the exact skin tone and hair color they had in mind, and embellish their creations with collage objects for hair, eyes, mouths, and so on. Soft music plays and helps create a sense of calm. Varied spaces and interest areas provide children with multiple choices and opportunities for engagement. In keeping with children’s current interest in learning more about themselves, other areas of the room bear evidence of work and exploration carefully curated by teachers that reflects what children have been exploring. The teaching staff work easily and collaboratively together, creating a seamless learning experience for children as they move in and out of direct engagement with groups and individual children.

This program employs a number of approaches to teaching and learning that together create an environment that addresses children’s interests and needs in a context of inclusion and appreciation for diversity, including complementing their Creative Curriculum® approach with a Reggio Emilia-inspired philosophy, which seeks to empower children to be curious and direct their own experiential learning. As a result, teachers provide opportunities for children to explore new concepts and create their own interpretations of what they are studying. For example, after examining their faces in a mirror and reading the book *The Barefoot Book of Children*, teachers engage with children in a discussion of eyes and all the things that are the same and different about each person’s eyes. The discussion is followed by children drawing their own eyes; teachers collect the drawings and create an exhibit and a written description of the experience. Through the program’s dual language curriculum Soy Bilingue®, and through intentional staffing of teachers who are bilingual, children learn daily in both English and Spanish. All print materials, including books, are also available in both languages. All these features and more make this program a place where children can be curious and explore, and empathetic and empowered as they prepare for kindergarten and beyond.



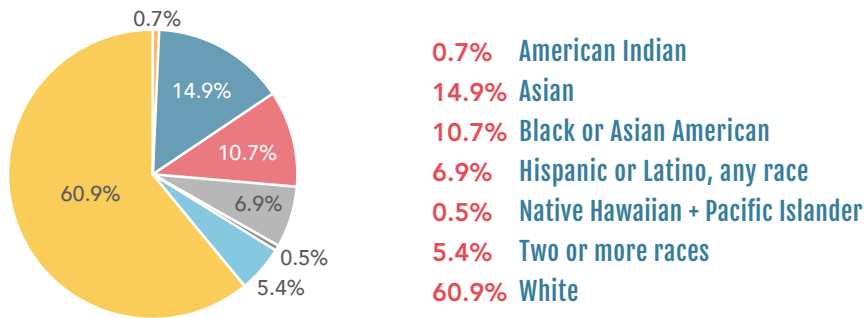
PROGRAM CONTEXT

This site, which applies a dual language approach to instruction, operates two SPP classrooms and also offers non-SPP preschool programming. The SPP classrooms serve about 35 children, the majority of whom identify as Hispanic or Latino. Also, all of the staff who participated in the case study identify as Hispanic or Latino and report Spanish as their native language. All are bilingual in Spanish and English. Collectively, the teaching staff have more than seven decades of field experience. The majority of those that are affiliated with the SPP program had been involved since 2017.



THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The racial and ethnic breakdown of residents in this neighborhood:

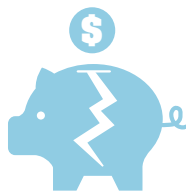


The median household income for families in this neighborhood is approximately **\$64,000**



22% of families in the neighborhood speak a language other than English at home

13% of families in this area have income below the poverty level



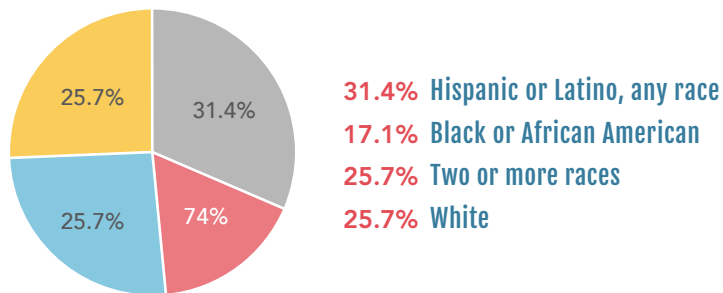
The same as the city level



5% OF THE POPULATION IS UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE

THE PROGRAM

The racial and ethnic breakdown of children enrolled at this SPP site:



89% of children are from families with income at or less than 300% of federal poverty level

Many children speak English, but some report their primary language as:

SPANISH

Seattle neighborhood profiles¹² (<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/neighborhoods-and-districts>) and Statistical Atlas (<https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/Seattle/Overview>) provided demographic data for this graphic. The Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning provided site-level data.

¹² The race/ethnicity percentages add up to 99.9%; these were left unaltered to reflect the data reported from the neighborhood profile.

PROVIDER EXPERIENCES

Staff from this site participated in focus groups and interviews during which they reflected on their experiences implementing SPP standards and using DEEL supports and described best practices staff members implemented or aspire to implement in their program or classroom. This section of the report provides key themes from these reflections. Each theme is enclosed in a gray box below, followed by additional detail including example quotations from site staff.

Experiences Highlighting Best Practices

During focus groups and interviews, staff shared how they implemented best practices in the areas of curriculum, classroom management, culturally responsive instructional strategies, assessment, and family engagement. The following themes of “following the child’s lead,” “collaborating to manage classroom behavior,” “centering culturally responsive practices,” and “prioritizing relationships with families” are based on staff descriptions of these best practices.

FOLLOWING THE CHILD’S LEAD

Staff describe their child-led and data-driven approach to delivering the curriculum, which they believe creates effective learning environments for children.

At this site, staff based their curriculum studies on their children's interests. For instance, they did a study on hair type and color after children showed interest in those topics. On another occasion, staff overheard conversations the children had about emotions, so staff took this as an opportunity to follow and expand upon children's interests by bringing in mirrors to engage in a study on facial expression and emotion.

Staff shared that they tried to find materials and activities related to topics children were interested in and then allowed children to take a lead in their own learning. To be successful

with this approach, staff believed it was important to allow flexibility in the curriculum; they did not have to follow the curriculum exactly if it was not what children wanted or needed. This flexibility was supported by an overall philosophy that change is a never-ending process and that staff must be willing to change their approach if a change would improve children's experiences. Staff held to the idea that children are protagonists in their play and in charge of their own learning, so adults must adapt and allow opportunities for children to express themselves.

In addition to following the children's lead to structure learning, staff also used various kinds of data to inform their practices. Staff emphasized that they take a strengths-based approach to the use of data in the program. As a group across the site, staff reviewed what the teachers had been able to accomplish with the children and brought teaching teams together to reflect on which practices were working and which ones could be improved. Staff recognized that if children's outcomes are not improving, staff members needed to change something in their practices, language and communication, or connections with the children.

"Having the kids kind of lead what we do in the classroom gets them very involved and gets them into what they're doing. Some curriculums are set in stone. And you have to do it in the same order every year. And maybe not all kids are into cars."

- SPP Staff Member

"Once we see the data, and if we feel that our practices are not up to par to meet the outcomes of the children, then we have to change something within either our practices, our language, our connections with the children, or how we're really seeing the data."

- SPP Staff Member

Staff also described taking a culturally sensitive approach to interpreting data and sharing information with families. For example, when reviewing children's English receptive and expressive language assessment scores, staff members also considered children's abilities and proficiency in their home language. Staff used scores from the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to develop individualized language development plans. Staff recognized that this assessment did not account for proficiency in languages other than English and could overlook children's abilities in other languages. As English is not the primary language for many children and families at this site, staff made sure that they also monitored children's home language and shared data with families in a way that celebrates growth in both English and the children's home language.

COLLABORATING TO MANAGE CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Staff note that many children experiencing behavioral challenges attend this program, which can pose a challenge for the teaching team. However, staff members have developed a multipronged system of support to manage classroom behaviors.

As described earlier, staff sometimes faced challenges during which staff members did not feel fully equipped to meet the needs of all children in their classrooms. To address these concerns, staff developed several practices. One of the most effective practices was establishing a multi-pronged system of support, through which staff received support via professional development, from one another, and from administrators.

Staff described some professional development opportunities they received that focused on trauma and brain development. Staff members shared that colleagues at other program sites in their network were very knowledgeable regarding trauma-informed care, and staff members were able to reach out to these colleagues for support. Sometimes they were also available to visit the site and provide in-person peer training. Staff emphasized that this kind of peer learning was especially helpful and could perhaps benefit them in meeting other SPP requirements.

In addition to peer learning with other colleagues, staff also made time to learn from one another at their own site. They described a practice called “each one, teach one,” which consisted of meeting on Fridays ready to share a beneficial technique or resource. This practice was based on the idea that by sharing knowledge, staff members could multiply the benefit of effective practices across their team.

Teachers did not rely solely on their own teaching team; they also received support from administrators. The site administrators were always willing to provide thought partnership whenever teachers had questions about their classrooms. Rather than give teachers answers or dismiss concerns, administrators put in time and effort to co-create solutions. Administrators were also willing to provide hands-on assistance in the classroom. This support went beyond just being another body in the room for coverage; administrators often modeled practices for teachers who expressed that modeling is usually the most effective professional development technique.



“I know that we do provide that support. Even if I have to step in to be their teacher in the classroom, I’ll do it to make sure that the teachers are OK, or I’ll walk with them to the park because the child always has a hard time with the park transition.”

- SPP Staff Member

CENTERING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

The staff emphasize social justice as a core value of the site. In the classroom, staff implement culturally responsive practices and try to make sure they are not taking a superficial approach. Staff believe it is important for children to know their culture, identity, self-image, and language.

Staff acknowledged children's cultures in various ways. They tried to embed different cultures in the classrooms by having different cultural items present throughout the classroom. They also used different languages in the classrooms throughout the day such as Vietnamese. Honoring children's home language was a critical component of staff members' practice. Specifically, supporting language development in both English and the child's home language was represented in each child's individualized learning plan. Staff recognized that some children came into preschool knowing very little English; thus, staff deployed strategies such as exposing these children more frequently to key words in English through songs and by reading books. For several staff, they believed this was essential to help children communicate and interact with their peers in the class. Staff also described an approach called total physical response, where they showed children physical objects and demonstrated physical movements that helped create a link to words they were using.

In addition to these practices, this site offered a dual language English-Spanish model where they primarily spoke English on Mondays and Wednesdays and Spanish on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

"[The administrator] provides us with some items that reflect every culture we have here. For example, in the home area we have a hijab and different kinds of items that reflect everybody's culture in the classroom.... I remember one time, [the coach] came to the classroom and he was modeling. We were eating and he was like, 'Oh, how do you say rice in Vietnamese?' He was involving that language at the table and I saw that.... That practice is something that we really like to do and continue doing because we really want [to make sure that] every child feels welcome in the classroom."

- SPP Staff Member

PRIORITIZING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

Staff emphasize that relationship building with families is of the utmost importance for the site and is critical to the site's philosophy.

Staff shared that they enrolled families on site, which was important to them because they wanted to make sure the site's enrollment reflected the community. Being physically connected to the community allowed staff members to succeed at this effort. Their efforts to place families at the center of their work did not stop there. From the beginning of the year, staff made efforts to connect meaningfully with families. Staff members described events at the beginning of the

year such as the family connection event, during which children showed their families the classroom and what a typical day looked like. Staff shared that they used these events to help connect families to one another as well.

Staff also made efforts to connect with families throughout the year. Staff members learned about each families' home languages and preferred languages for communication with their child. Staff also made sure they learned every family member's name. Families were invited to participate in the classroom all year as volunteers for reading or other activities and also to attend several more formal family conferences.



"At the beginning of the school year what we always establish is a family connection time. Well, I guess prior to that we do tours. Because we're a self-enrolling center, the city doesn't do our enrollment. So, with me, the biggest thing is the relationship building that we have with the families. That's one of our core values. I feel that the relationship [we] create with the families is what's going to set us in the right direction with the families."

- SPP Staff Member

Experiences Implementing SPP Standards

To ensure that all children who participated in SPP received high-quality early childhood experiences, DEEL established a set of standards regarding aspects of programs such as curriculum, teacher qualifications, and enrollment requirements. The following themes of "exceeding expectations and asking for help" and "meeting the needs of all children" are based on the experiences staff described in implementing these standards.

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS AND ASKING FOR HELP

Staff have developed several strategies for effectively meeting and exceeding SPP standards, particularly in how staff members meet deliverable deadlines and how they approach challenges. At the core of their strategies lies a strong commitment to transparency on multiple levels and a willingness to learn from their education specialist and one another.

Staff at this site made use of a number of organizational strategies to help them successfully implement SPP standards. To succeed in meeting deliverable deadlines, staff followed the contract closely and kept deliverable dates on the calendar to help with planning. Staff emphasized that their goal in planning carefully and staying organized was not just to meet SPP requirements but to generally provide a high-quality environment for children as they "prepare them for life."

Staff also had a striking dedication to transparency, both internally and with their community. They described the rigor of their hiring process for new teachers and other staff. For example, staff outlined all the responsibilities and requirements of teaching positions in great detail to ensure candidates were a good fit, including requirements related to being site being a SPP program. Staff maintained this level of transparency with families as well. Staff made sure families understood how the program was funded and how children were enrolled to help demystify a process that could be very complex—especially when the program was unable to enroll children.

When addressing issues or challenges, staff shared that they reached out to their education specialist for help with their questions. They highly valued the open communication they had with their education specialist and believed that it enabled them to learn. Additionally, the staff appreciated the embedded planning periods, which they used to collaborate with one another. During this time, staff reflected on classroom practices as a group and troubleshooted immediate concerns by brainstorming and walking through solutions together. This time helped establish a sense of community and camaraderie among staff at this site.

“The expectation is that we follow best practices through the assessments and the screenings ...I really align with those values. Just because I know that, in order for the children to move along and be where they need to be prepared for life, we need to also uphold to those standards. So, when teachers are interviewed, they are showed everything in regards to this is a SPP program, this is our standards that we follow, this is what is needed of us. We follow a very transparent philosophy in regards to the expectations of the teachers, the expectations of the parents, and the expectations of the administration.”

- SPP Staff Member

MEETING THE NEEDS OF ALL CHILDREN

Staff describe some challenges in meeting the needs of all children in the classroom. While staff understand that the program does not deny children based on Individualized Education Plan (IEP) status, staff members do not always feel adequately trained to manage their classrooms as they work with greater numbers of children with behavioral challenges. Changes to the program structure resulting from the transition to SPP, especially the requirement of a six-hour day, also pose challenges.

While staff understood that children would be served regardless of IEP status, doing so proved to be challenging in some cases. Staff did not always feel fully equipped to meet the needs of children in their classrooms, which could impact the quality of their practice. Staff provided examples of moments when they did not know how to address a child's behavior, such as when a child begins hitting and kicking, and wished they had more training and education about the best approaches. Staff members also believed that having a third staff person in the classroom would help with classroom management overall, so when a teacher was helping one specific child, the other teachers could make sure the rest of the

“It was a change because ... we needed to arrange the schedule for six hours.... For some of [the staff it’s] longer because it was the first time with six hours.... We used a lot of trying [different arrangements] to see if it works.... It was really challenging but good to see how we can change too, for providing the best [for children].”

- SPP Staff Member

class operated smoothly. In addition to better learning how to manage behavior, staff desired to learn more about social-emotional development, in the hope of better understanding the experiences of children with IEPs in their classrooms.

Staff also noted how the shift to their schedule challenged them to create a full day experience for the children in their care. Specifically, the site previously provided half-day programming, and it did not follow the public school schedule. In transitioning to SPP, staff found that it was difficult at first to adjust to their new schedule and how they would be able to restructure the day so that it was engaging for all of the children enrolled in the program. Further, staff were concerned that the new structure reduced their previously reserved planning and reflection time that they believed enabled them to offer high-quality experiences for their students.

Experiences Using DEEL Supports

The research team asked staff about their experiences using DEEL supports. Specifically, staff described their experiences with DEEL supports in the areas of contracting and funding, application and enrollment supports, quality teaching (including culturally responsive strategies and equitable practices), and technical assistance and compliance monitoring. The following themes of “improving the enrollment process,” “refining coaching topics,” and “cultivating trust” are based on staff descriptions of these experiences.

IMPROVING THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS

The staff at this site complete their own enrollment because it is important to them to be active in the surrounding neighborhood and make sure the enrollment reflects the community. However, the enrollment process, as currently designed, creates obstacles for some families and requires site staff to dedicate substantial effort to working in the community.

One of the challenges staff faced was with the enrollment system. They reported that the application (made available by DEEL) was sometimes shared late, causing delays in enrollment. Staff also shared concerns over their contracts and funding, since if the site was not fully enrolled by a certain date, the site might not receive full funding. Additionally, staff had concerns about the delays they experienced in communication from DEEL, especially related to issues with enrollment. Staff members described times when they would make several attempts to contact DEEL staff but would not receive a reply.

Staff believed that enrollment requirements could be more flexible to better meet the needs of families in the community. Staff described the SPP documentation requirements including verification of child age, address, and income, and believed that if families did not have all the documentation, that they were not allowed to start at the program. Thus, staff believed documentation requirements created challenges for families, particularly for families experiencing homelessness.¹³ Staff wished for more flexibility related to the challenging experiences that children and their families were going through.

“If families don’t have all the documentation, then they don’t allow the family to start. I feel that sometimes if they’re experiencing homelessness, or they’re experiencing a transition within their jobs where they don’t have all their pay stubs, or their ID doesn’t match the address, then we’re not able to serve the child. [But] it’s really not the child’s fault.”

- SPP Staff Member

REFINING COACHING TOPICS

Coaching is a highly appreciated resource, but staff would like more coaching on topics that are timelier and more relevant to the challenges staff members face in the moment.

Overall, staff expressed satisfaction with the support they received from DEEL administrators, coaches, and other staff such as nurses, but staff wanted more advanced and proactive support. Specifically, staff reported that the coach provided some support on classroom management and social justice and cultural responsiveness, such as handouts on breathing techniques and a form to assess how cultures were reflected in the classroom. However, they desired to learn more about

instructional techniques and strategies to support children’s social-emotional skills. Staff also shared that sometimes they received resources in the form of articles or other written guides but wanted more practical, in-classroom support.

“Having more time with, having him more in our classroom more often will help. He gives us all these tools, but we want more visit [time] our classrooms. ‘Hey, can you observe me doing [in practice]? Or can you help me to see how can I [deal with] this situation right now?’”

- SPP Staff Member

Staff also described inconsistencies with coaching. Sometimes scheduled sessions with coaches were rescheduled or canceled. Staff members understood that coaching was a limited resource, and were mindful of how canceled sessions impacted the timing of dealing with their concerns and questions. For instance, a topic that was relevant at the time of the original session might no longer be relevant by the time staff members actually met with their coach. Overall, they wanted the visits to better align with when they needed them.

¹³ The SPP Program manual indicates a process for homeless families, which suggests a gap in communication or understanding between this site and the city.



CULTIVATING TRUST

Staff are proud of the strong relationship they have built with DEEL over the years. They believe DEEL trusts them to deliver high-quality programming, allowing them flexibility in their approach. Staff in turn trust that DEEL will meet their needs and always focus on what is best for the children and families staff members serve.

Staff expressed that one of their major successes was the relationship they built with DEEL. They believed that DEEL trusted them and was responsive to their needs. Staff believed they consistently exceeded requirements and provided high-quality experiences for children and families, which DEEL recognized. In turn, DEEL staff were open to ideas and requests from staff. For example, staff described how they needed more help in a classroom where a child needed high levels of one-on-one support, and DEEL was able to provide a third teacher.

“I think that the biggest strength we have with the city [DEEL] is the partnership that we’ve built over the eleven years or almost twelve years that we’ve been around and that they trust us ... that the philosophy we’re going to use for the children fits [their goals].”

- SPP Staff Member

Staff also appreciated the flexibility they experienced from DEEL in terms of the curriculum and approach, which staff believe has allowed them to deliver high-quality services for children and families. Staff at this site were required to receive formal training on Creative Curriculum®, but they were allowed to blend the curriculum with the Reggio Emilia approach and maintain the overall philosophy of their site.

EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTICES

SRC staff conducted two classroom observations using a qualitative reflective tool developed by SRC to examine antibias and equitable classroom practices in early learning settings. The tool promotes reflection on areas of classroom practice such as environment, interactions, language use, curriculum, and family engagement. This section provides a summary of areas of strength noted during those observations.



FOCUS AREA: Environment

The environment focus area included the materials in the environment, books, toys, dramatic play spaces, documentation of children's work, and overall classroom design.

Several toys reflected diversity, including play people and puppets with various skin tones and non-stereotypical (not stereotypical based on gender or perceived racial identity) occupations. The art area featured materials in a variety of skin tone colors, and children had access to People Color® art supplies. The dramatic play area contained both clothing items and play food items from various cultures, such as spices popular in the children's various home countries. The staff also decorated the classroom with family artifacts, pictures of children's families, and displays from studies of self-portrait and self-identity in which children explored their eye colors and hair types.

The variety of books available in this classroom was a noted strength. Books were available in various languages and reflected various gender identities, family structures, and religions. There were also books that the children and staff made themselves.

Staff in this classroom used a variety of techniques to ensure fairness. The classroom had a helper board where staff displayed names of helpers, who were picked randomly. The classroom also had a display describing how to resolve conflicts and a table with resources about emotions and emotional expression.





FOCUS AREA: Interactions

The interactions focus area included overall adult interactions with children in the classroom, adult responses to children's questions and curiosity about human difference, adult redirection of inaccurate information shared by children that involves superiority or oppression, non-stereotypical encouragement, and use of given names.

At this site, staff responded to questions of human difference, emphasized strengths, offered encouragement in non-stereotypical ways, such that they did not offer support as a result of a child's identity (e.g., ability, gender or racial identity, etc.). They also used given names. When a child asked a staff member whether another child was wearing a hijab, the staff member responded by providing the child with more information about the hijab. Another staff member emphasized strengths by saying, "Thank you for being safe" to the children, rather than only telling them what not to do.

Staff in this classroom also encouraged all children to use the dramatic play area. Specifically, a staff member told children that both boys and girls could pretend to be doctors during play. Staff also consistently used children's given names, as a simple way to show care and respect. Observers did not witness staff using nicknames or pet names for children. Observations revealed no cases of explicit bias in staff interactions with the children.



FOCUS AREA: Curriculum

The curriculum focus area included how adults help children build strong identities and how adults demonstrate respect for all children's thoughts and ideas. Elements of this focus area also included how adults incorporate children's lives outside the classroom, initiate conversations about human difference through planned activities, and encourage children to act against unfairness and stereotypes in the classroom.

Staff in this classroom talked about children's experiences outside the classroom, built on observations of human difference, and discussed unfairness with children. When a staff member and child were playing at a table with a variety of spices placed atop, the staff member asked the child to show her the spices that his family used at home. On other occasions, staff asked children about the language they spoke at home and about who typically picked them up at the end of the day.

While reading the book *I Like Myself!* a staff member commented about the points of human difference raised in the book. For example, she stopped to ask the children to describe the staff member's eyes and hair. She then commented about one child's eyes and another child's nose. Staff also held discussions about unfairness. For example, a staff member helped a child process why they took a car from their friend without asking and discussed what they should do next.



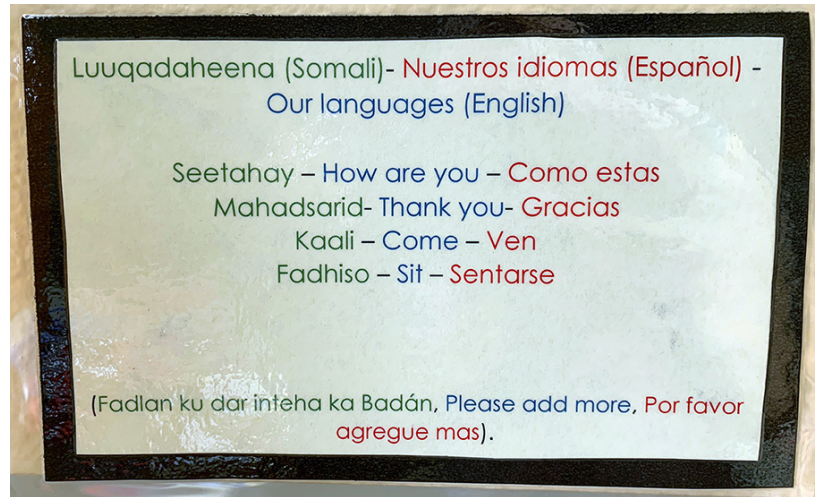


FOCUS AREA: Language Use

The language use focus area included use of words that treat human difference with respect, use of probing and clarifying techniques to assist children, acknowledgment and validation of all children's perspectives, higher-order thinking questions asked of all children, focus on human characteristics rather than material possessions, encouragement of children to speak their home language, and encouragement of appropriate responses when children encounter unfair treatment such as if a peer was making fun of their appearance.

In the classroom, staff treated differences with respect, commented on human characteristics, used and encouraged home language, and helped children develop appropriate responses to unfair treatment. When a child commented about a classmate who was moving during circle time, a staff member responded by saying, "Some people need to do other things. They have more wiggles, and that's OK." While playing at the art table, a staff member praised a child for being safe with the scissors. During times of conflict, staff helped children understand their actions, especially regarding unfairness. When a child was upset over passing markers at the art table, a staff member told the child that simply saying "ah" might not be understood by everyone. In another case, a child did not want her page of a homemade book to be shared, so the staff member approached and discussed a solution with the child.

A noted strength of this program was how staff used and encouraged children's home language. Throughout the observation, staff used phrases in other languages and prompted children to speak in both English and other languages.



SUMMARY

Staff at this site describe generally positive experiences implementing SPP requirements and standards and hope to continue growing their capacity to provide high-quality early childhood experiences. A summary of key takeaways from their experiences follows.

- 1 Staff described their program as both **child-led** and **data-driven**. They believed in allowing children to **guide their own learning** and express themselves. Staff members also thought that as teachers, they should be **flexible in their practice** and used data to help them meet children's needs.
- 2 **Social justice was a core value** at this site and dictated much of the program's approach. Staff made efforts to get to know children in meaningful ways and help them **explore their identities** in the classroom.
- 3 **Family engagement was another core value** at this site and was woven through much of the process—from enrollment to events and other efforts that span the entire year. Staff tried to get to know every family and help families get to know one another as well.
- 4 Staff utilized a **multipronged system of support**, which included maximizing support from one another, administrators, and by utilizing supports provided by DEEL. They believed this allowed them to meet the **needs of all children** in their program and helped ensure that **teachers did not feel isolated** in their practice. However, staff members **still experienced some challenges** in meeting the needs of all children and would like more support.
- 5 Staff shared a wide array of experiences implementing SPP standards. Much of staff members' experience revolved around meeting deliverable deadlines, and staff developed strategies focused on **organization and transparency**. They also described experiences shifting to SPP, which **operated differently** from their former program structure.
- 6 Staff **strove to meet the needs of all children** in the classroom but **sometimes struggled** to offer high-quality experiences to children with high behavioral or social-emotional needs. They would like to receive **more training and support** in this area to help make their classrooms as inclusive as possible.
- 7 Staff appreciated the support they received from DEEL but wanted to see improvements in the enrollment process and with coaching. Staff believed that the **enrollment process could be more flexible** to better meet the needs of families and of the program. Staff desired more **in-classroom coaching** that would help them navigate situations in the moment. One of their biggest successes was the **mutual trust** they cultivated with DEEL.
- 8 Generally, observers did not notice any bias during classroom observations. For this site, the environment and language use were notable strengths. The classroom environment offered **ample evidence of materials that reflect children's backgrounds**, and staff **constantly encouraged children to use their home language**.

A FAMILY CHILD CARE HUB CASE STUDY

It's morning and time to open the door to the family child care home. A sign on the gate welcomes children and parents as they arrive and descend to the lower level of the home, where the entire area is designed as a learning space for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Separate activity and care areas are designed and equipped for each age group, and a common area includes a small library, and a comfortable couch. A dramatic play area is available to both groups of children. A kitchen and bathroom are also on this level, creating a sense and feel that this is the children's special place to spend their days. This center has been a fixture in the area for many years—in fact, the current director purchased the business from its longtime original owner. The center provides a familiar space for children across the age span, siblings, and even the provider's own grandchildren to learn.

Staff have initiated a daily schedule, which helps both families and staff to follow routines. As a result, children and parents know the routine for arrival well—once they enter, older children remove their shoes and scamper to hang coats, backpacks, and personal treasures in their cubbies. Children start the morning playing, some in the dramatic area, others in the block area. Staff are busy greeting children and alert them to an upcoming story time. During story time, several of the children cozy up together on the couch, while a few sit closely beside the teacher, all listening attentively. After story time, staff help the children sit down to breakfast, where exchanges take place in English, French, and Spanish. Although multiple languages are not a formal part of the program, children are regularly exposed to hearing languages other than their own. In fact, the director and one of the assistant teachers are bilingual and share their languages and cultures freely with children. The children and staff end their time together with a lively discussion of the spices and other ingredients in the breakfast everyone enjoyed together. Afterward, the preschoolers move into their area—a large, sunny room lined with windows where children sit together to work on their current project, a study of clothing. Sitting around a small table, children have completed drawings of what they are wearing and are now engaged in a conversation with a staff member. A number of children report that they are wearing stripes, and the discussion takes a sudden turn to what is a stripe and what is not. Free play for the preschoolers provides opportunities to make choices and gather in small groups. Conversations and negotiations take place around the room as children select and engage in a variety of activities and games.

Families at this site come first. As is true for so many family child care programs, the director considers families part of her own family and makes sure families have easy and frequent opportunities to meet and discuss issues. As children prepare to go down for nap, the director prepares for a meeting with a parent that will happen right before pick up time. Before she heads to her office, she reminds her staff of their upcoming staff meeting. Since becoming a part of SPP, her team meets more regularly to plan lessons and review children's progress. Overall, this site offers children a home away from home that nurtures their academic and social-emotional development.



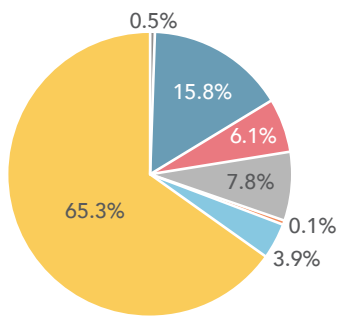
PROGRAM CONTEXT

This family child care hub includes six SPP providers across the city of Seattle. This evaluation primarily engaged three provider sites, which serve 16 SPP-eligible children total, half of whom are African American or Black. The observed classrooms for this site also serve infants and toddlers, but these children were not part of the evaluation. The staff who participated in the case study identify as African, African American, or Black and report English, Somali, and French as their native languages. Collectively, these providers have more than seven decades of field experience. They have varying tenures with SPP, but for many of them, this is their first experience implementing a formal curriculum in their home-based settings. The hub is overseen by a coordinator, who is located at a local nonprofit organization that supports the network of providers in implementing SPP.



THE NEIGHBORHOODS

The racial and ethnic breakdown of residents in the north Seattle neighborhood:



- 0.5% American Indian
- 15.8% Asian
- 6.1% Black or Asian American
- 7.8% Hispanic or Latino, any race
- 0.5% Native Hawaiian + Pacific Islander
- 0.1% Some other race
- 3.9% Two or more races
- 65.3% White



The median household income for families in this neighborhood is approximately **\$55,712**

15.5% of families in this area have income below the poverty level



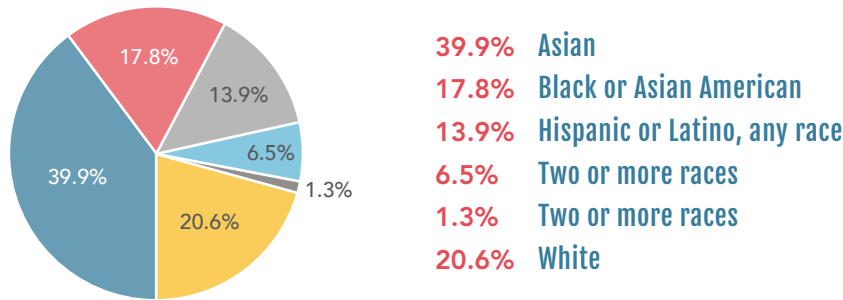
26% of families in the neighborhood speak a language other than English at home

The city level is **22%**



6.75% OF THE POPULATION IS UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE

The racial and ethnic breakdown of residents in the south Seattle neighborhood:



The median household income for families in this neighborhood is approximately **\$62,504**

19.6% of families in this area have income below the poverty level

5.66% of the population is under age 5



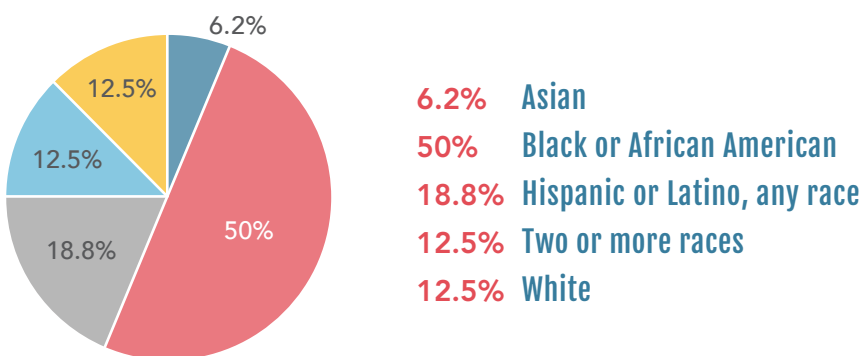
42.5% of families in the neighborhood speak a language other than English at home



The city level is **22%**

THE PROGRAM

The racial and ethnic breakdown of children enrolled at these SPP sites (observed sites only):



The majority of children speak English in these classrooms, but some also speak: **AMHARIC**

AMHARIC



94%

of children are from families with income at or less than 300% of federal poverty level

Seattle neighborhood profiles (<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/neighborhoods-and-districts>). Statistical Atlas (<https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/Seattle/Overview>), and the Census (<https://factfinder.census.gov>) provided demographic data for this graphic. The Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning provided site-level data as of January 2019.

PROVIDER EXPERIENCES

Staff from this hub participated in focus groups and interviews during which they reflected on their experiences implementing SPP standards and using DEEL supports and described best practices staff members implemented or aspire to implement in their program or classroom. This section of the report provides key themes from these reflections. Each theme is enclosed in a gray box below, followed by additional detail including examples in site staff members' own words.

Experiences Highlighting Best Practices

During focus groups and interviews, staff shared how they implemented best practices in the areas of curriculum, classroom management, culturally responsive instructional strategies, assessment, and family engagement. The following themes of “staying organized to maximize learning,” “leveraging personal experiences for culturally responsive practice,” and “building lasting relationships with families from day one” are based on staff descriptions of these best practices.

STAYING ORGANIZED TO MAXIMIZE LEARNING

Staff meet with teaching teams to help them manage curriculum implementation and meet deadlines for assessments. Staff also share the importance of well-planned weekly schedules and consistent daily routines.

Prior to joining SPP, staff occasionally used meetings as needed to help plan children's learning experiences. As their approaches became more formalized through the introduction of a mandated curriculum, staff found that they needed more formal and consistent ways to stay organized. Staff cited frequent staff meetings as a way they kept their teams on track—especially for planning lessons and gathering documentation to meet assessment deadlines. Staff also described the importance of keeping the curriculum at the forefront of their practice so that challenging behaviors did not detract from learning experiences. Some staff members expressed frustration about cases in which challenging behaviors interrupted instruction, but these staff members learned how to use the curriculum to help them navigate these situations. For example, staff highlighted Mighty Minutes, a tool from Creative Curriculum® that is intended to help teachers manage behavior and help with transitions.

Consistency was also key for staff. They shared that it was important to strike a balance between flexibility and routine so that children knew what to expect on a daily basis. Staff believed that, over the course of time, children began to learn the routine and were able to better manage their behaviors independently. Consistency helped to minimize disruptions to learning and allowed the staff to focus on instruction rather than classroom management.

“What I found changed for us since we started is, I’m having more staff meetings. It used to be once a month. Now we’re doing it almost on a weekly basis. And [we make] sure that we implement the curriculum, make sure we’ve got a lesson plan, make sure that we put [in] TSG assessments. We talk more.”

- SPP Staff Member

LEVERAGING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE

Culturally responsive practice is highly valued by staff, and they see themselves as uniquely equipped to create culturally responsive environments because of the diversity of their own backgrounds.

Staff emphasized that culturally responsive practices had a foundation in a respect for all children and their families, curiosity about children's cultural backgrounds, and a willingness to engage children when they brought up human difference. Staff also described how they made sure the environment reflected the diversity of their families by having family pictures and home artifacts in the classroom. In addition, staff shared that their programs hosted family nights, when families brought food from their cultures to share with one another.



Staff saw themselves as uniquely equipped to teach about equity. They acknowledged the diversity of their own backgrounds and made sure they shared their own cultures and languages with the children. Some classrooms were decorated with maps, fabrics, and artwork from staff members' home countries. Cultural music also played in the background, and staff kept a collection of their favorite music to share with children. Staff also taught children common phrases in their home languages.

Staff believed that their own experiences served as inspiration for how to teach their students to approach human difference. Many staff shared stories of their experiences as immigrants and members of racial and ethnic minority groups. Since many of their children and families had similar experiences, staff felt empowered to engage with them on these topics.

"It's really cool and it's so important because your culture is almost who you are. I always tell the kids, if I [am] Somali, that's who I am, it makes me, it's a part of me. Being Somali is so important to me.... I'm first generation. I always remember when ... I was growing up, [I would] try to be more American. [But I thought] maybe I should speak in my language all the time because Somali is my first language, so things like that, it almost tears you away from your culture and almost changes who you are authentically, so I always try to make it [a part of] my child care. Be who you are authentically. If you speak a different language, if you're from a different country, just be that.... It adds to you; it doesn't take away from you."

- SPP Staff Member

BUILDING LASTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES FROM DAY ONE

Family is at the center of everything staff do. They employ several strategies for engaging families to make sure all families feel welcome in the programs.

Staff described efforts to get to know the families early in the school year. Staff shared that starting from day one was critical for ensuring that all families felt welcome throughout their time in the program. Staff from this site were particularly attuned to cultivating relationships with families early, as staff often welcomed multiple siblings from the same families prior to joining SPP. These relationships were often deep and endured throughout the years. One staff member shared that she provided care for a current student's mother when she was of preschool age. Another staff member showcased a wall of photos and greeting cards sent by families over the years. This wall even contained high school graduation announcements from former students.

In addition to cultivating relationships with families early, staff shared that they tried to provide a variety of ways for families to communicate and engage with the program. Staff acknowledged that not all families were able to engage in the same ways because of different work schedules, family cultures, or other obligations. While staff generally preferred engaging with families in person, staff members also described newsletters and parent boards that families could review quickly on their own time. Staff also described efforts to connect outside of normal program hours—for example, by hosting family nights when all families were encouraged to attend and share their favorite foods.



“To run any type of program, I don’t care what kind it is, you have to know the family and have that relationship with the family. Then you can start that growth with the child.”

- SPP Staff Member

Experiences Implementing SPP Standards

To ensure that all children who participated in SPP received high-quality early childhood experiences, DEEL established a set of standards regarding aspects of programs such as curriculum, teacher qualifications, and enrollment requirements. The following themes of “acclimating to a new curriculum and professional network” and “balancing old ways of operating with new requirements” are based on the experiences staff described in implementing these standards.

ACCLIMATING TO A NEW CURRICULUM AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Participation in SPP is the first opportunity for many staff to implement a formal, approved curriculum and belong to a formal professional network. Staff acknowledge that this experience is a shift that requires a change in their classroom practices.

Participation in SPP required programs to use one of two mandated curricula. This hub selected Creative Curriculum® for all of its providers to implement. Staff believed that using this valid, evidence-based curriculum helped them become more organized in their classrooms. In the past, staff would be on their own to find books, materials, and activities. With guided studies and access to materials through SPP, lessons were easier to plan. However, the shift was not always easy. Staff described a steep learning curve for becoming familiar with the curriculum and TSG—an observation-based assessment system—but staff members believed that their hard work in conjunction with the support they received from DEEL and their hub coordinator helped them learn and improve. Staff also reported that their limited fluency in English sometimes created barriers for curriculum implementation, however they found their coach to be a great support as they became familiar with the curriculum.

“How do we change it if we don’t know that we’re doing something? Remember that we have been on islands by ourselves. Now we have received an opportunity that has opened doors for us, that has changed our way of looking at us being just who they always used to say we were. No, we’re no longer those providers. We are teachers.”
- SPP Staff Member

Staff shared that being a part of SPP provided them with a network of peers that they could lean on for support and professional development. Previously, many felt isolated in their practice and desired the opportunity to network. Upon joining SPP, this network was readily available to staff, and monthly meetings were established to help ensure that staff always felt supported. These monthly meetings, which also included the administrator and coach, became a space for learning and camaraderie. Staff believed that administrator participation in these meetings was a critical component of success. Support from the administrator helped staff to understand their responsibilities and helped them ensure deliverables were completed on time.

BALANCING OLD WAYS OF OPERATING WITH NEW REQUIREMENTS

Staff are learning how best to evolve to meet the new requirements of SPP. Staff share that SPP requirements related to enrollment have created some tension with how staff enrolled children in the past, specifically in terms of age of enrollment and residency.

A hallmark of this site prior to SPP participation was a wide range of accepted ages for enrollment. Programs served a mix of children including infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Staff shared that this wide range allowed them to enroll multiple children from a single family, which was very attractive to the families they served. This structure also created

a flow of children from infant programming into preschool programming, creating stability for staff. Staff reported that as a result of participating in SPP they sharpened their focus on the experiences of preschool children. Unfortunately, some staff reported that participating in SPP made it difficult to manage care for infants through preschool aged children. This difficulty was particularly evident with infants as staff noticed a great difference between caring for infants and serving toddlers and preschoolers. Staff noted that infant care required greater one-on-one and individualized attention, which they felt was harder for them to provide as their attention shifted to the preschool program. As a result, some providers have considered discontinuing offering infant and toddler services.

“So that’s my way of dealing with it, not taking in any more infants unless ... they’re coming [with] another sibling, and then just concentrating on toddlers and preschoolers. The problem with the toddlers of course [is] toilet training, and they are a little bit independent because they can feed themselves. The infants, no. So, more time has to be given to them. By just having toddlers and preschoolers, I think that will solve one of the problems.”

- SPP Staff Member

Staff also shared their struggles with the SPP requirement of serving preschool families that were Seattle residents. Prior to joining SPP, many programs in this hub served families from outside the Seattle city limits, especially if families lived right outside the city border. Staff expressed a desire to continue serving families they formed relationships with but acknowledged the difficulty in doing so as spaces for non-funded spots became limited over time.

Experiences Using DEEL Supports

The research team asked staff about their experiences using DEEL supports. Specifically, staff described their experiences with DEEL supports in the areas of contracting and funding, application and enrollment supports, quality teaching (including culturally responsive strategies and equitable practices), and technical assistance and compliance monitoring. The following themes of “appreciating training for all aspects of a successful program” and “looking ahead for coaching and alignment” are based on staff descriptions of these experiences.

APPRECIATING TRAINING FOR ALL ASPECTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Staff believe that effective training plays a large role in successfully transitioning to SPP. They cite intensive training at the beginning of the program and interactive training sessions as components of training that work well. Staff share that other components of training, such as lectures, are less effective.

Training related to the curriculum was critical for staff, as many of them had not previously implemented a rigorous curriculum in their programs. Staff shared that receiving ample training on the basics of the curriculum before starting was essential for success. Staff members appreciated that this initial preparation began with an overview of the curriculum that allowed staff to become familiar with its various components. Staff believed that shadowing or visiting other

programs while learning best practices for implementing the curriculum could be beneficial as well.

In terms of training format, staff emphasized that when training was provided in a lecture style, it was less effective than training that included interactive components and modeling. While they did not state the reason for the change, staff members deemed a shift to a mostly hands-on approach during the course of their training process as very beneficial. In addition to curriculum training, staff described training focused on the business aspect of their program. Staff received training on licensing, taxes, computer use, and other skills and knowledge areas that were critical for running their business. Staff appreciated this kind of training and felt better equipped, not just as teachers but as business owners.

“Another training that we recently got from the city is the business training. That helped a lot because the one that’s teaching us is so knowledgeable. She had all [the information about] what’s needed for the business part of it, the licensing, the income tax, what’s expected.”

- SPP Staff Member

LOOKING AHEAD FOR COACHING AND ALIGNMENT

Staff appreciate the coaching provided by DEEL and generally believe that their coach was effective. However, they have concerns about their coach’s capacity to continue providing the level of individual support they desire. Some staff also want alignment between multiple sources of coaching.

Staff shared that consistent and effective coaching was helpful as they continued to learn and grow with the curriculum. They described the coach as flexible and hands-on. For example, one staff member expressed appreciation that the coach came to her program after hours to answer questions. Staff also shared that the coach supported development of culturally responsive practices by encouraging the use of diverse materials in the classroom and suggesting that staff members share their own cultures.

“I have a wonderful coach [who] gives me insight I need. She will come when daycare’s over and stay several hours; it could be nine o’clock in the evening. So, she’s hands-on, and when I say hands-on, she’s hands-on. She’s willing to do it not just on weekdays but on the weekend and come and spend that time and work with you.”

- SPP Staff Member

Staff voiced concerns about the coach’s workload and whether the coach would be able to effectively provide support. They shared that the coach’s current approach required ample time for individualized attention and flexibility to work with staff members’ schedules.

Staff also expressed some concerns over alignment between multiple sources of coaching (DEEL, Early Achievers, etc.), specifically regarding ensuring that coaching does not become territorial and that coaches share information with one another. Staff believed that coaches from one entity might think that it was not their place to make a comment or assessment regarding a program, and information might go unshared as a result. Staff believed sharing information between coaches would benefit programs.

EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTICES

SRC staff conducted two classroom observations using a qualitative reflective tool developed by SRC to examine antibias and equitable classroom practices in early learning settings. The tool promotes reflection on areas of classroom practice such as environment, interactions, language use, curriculum, and family engagement. This section provides a summary of areas of strength noted during those observations.



FOCUS AREA: Environment

The environment focus area included the materials in the environment, books, toys, dramatic play spaces, documentation of children's work, and overall classroom design.

At this site, dramatic play areas contained both clothing items and play food items from various cultures, such as tortillas and dumplings. Classrooms also contained family artifacts and pictures of children's families throughout the space. Classrooms featured displays of children with varying abilities as well. Some classrooms had displays of children's self-portraits. Classroom decorations and play people featured various skin tones and abilities.

Books were available in various languages and reflected various gender identities, family structures, and religions. For example, observers noted a book about sports written in Arabic and a book about different types of hair.



FOCUS AREA: Interactions

The interactions focus area included overall adult interactions with children in the classroom, adult responses to children's questions and curiosity about human difference, adult redirection of inaccurate information shared by children that involves superiority or oppression, non-stereotypical encouragement, and use of given names.

At this site, staff responded to questions about human difference. For example, when a child commented about two adults in the classroom having similar skin tone and hair, a staff member confirmed the child's observation. Staff also offered non-stereotypical encouragement, encouraging all children to use the dramatic play area for playing dress up and cooking. A staff member also commented that sanitation workers can be both men and women after a child's question about the job. Staff also consistently used children's given names, as a simple sign of respect and care. Observers did not witness them using nicknames or pet names for children. Observations revealed no cases of explicit bias in staff interactions with the children.



FOCUS AREA: Curriculum

The curriculum focus area included how adults help children build strong identities and how adults demonstrate respect for all children's thoughts and ideas. Elements of this focus area also included how adults incorporate children's lives outside the classroom, initiate conversations about human difference through planned activities, and encourage children to act against unfairness and stereotypes in the classroom.

Staff connected ideas to children's lives outside the classroom and discussed unfairness. For example, after a walk around the neighborhood, a staff member asked children about the kinds of homes they lived in and if they ever talked to their neighbors. In preparation for a visit from a sanitation worker, another staff member asked children about how they disposed of garbage in their own homes. During a drawing activity at free play time, a staff member asked a child what her grandmother planted in her own garden.

During a conflict regarding a chair in the classroom, a staff member talked to the children about taking things from others and why this was not something they should be doing. In another case, a staff member discussed with the children solutions for conflict that did not involve hitting or violence.



FOCUS AREA: Language Use

The language use focus area included use of words that treat human difference with respect, use of probing and clarifying techniques to assist children, acknowledgment and validation of all children's perspectives, higher-order thinking questions asked of all children, focus on human characteristics rather than material possessions, encouragement of children to speak their home language, and encouragement of appropriate responses when children encounter unfair treatment such as if a peer said a negative comment towards them.

In the classroom, staff validated all children's perspectives by reminding them that they could all have different opinions. Staff also commented on human characteristics rather than material possessions. Staff members praised a child for helping her friend and commented on how well children were cutting paper and hanging up dress-up clothes. Staff encouraged home language use, as many children spoke languages other than English, such as Spanish and Amharic. The staff also helped children develop appropriate responses to unfair treatment. When a child became frustrated because another child encroached on the child's space, a staff member encouraged him to discuss the issue with his friend.

SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE!
Bilingualism is a skill and asset

LEARNING MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE IS GOOD FOR YOUR CHILD

- Teaching your home language will help your child develop a deep and lasting connection to their culture
- Children have the unique ability to learn many languages at the same time
- Knowledge of more than one language can boost your child's creative thinking and problem solving skills
- Sharing your home language gives your child the foundation to learn English well in school

BILINGUAL SKILLS HELP STUDENTS BE COMPETITIVE FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER

- A young person that graduates speaking two or more languages will have more job opportunities
- In high school, students can earn credits and the Seal of Biliteracy for knowledge of two languages
- National research has shown that Dual Language Programs have improved academic outcomes for students
- *ask your school district about dual language programs

HELP YOUR YOUNG CHILD LEARN THEIR HOME LANGUAGE:

- Talk with your child during daily activities, like washing the dishes, grocery shopping, driving or walking around
- Sing to your child and tell your child stories in your home language
- Ask open-ended questions while you play with your child
- Read to your child, ask your librarian if they have books in your home language
- Speak to your child in your home language throughout their life to help them retain their multilingual skills

NE AMERICA
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THE ROAD MAP PROJECT

SUMMARY

Staff at this site describe generally positive experiences implementing SPP requirements and standards and hope to continue growing their capacity to provide high-quality early childhood experiences. A summary of key takeaways from their experiences follows.

- 1 Staff believed culturally responsive practices were extremely important, and staff members attempted to make all children and families feel welcome in the program. Staff made efforts to decorate their classrooms with **home artifacts** from families and **shared their own cultures with children**. Staff strongly advocated for **using their own experiences** to help teach children about equity and social justice.
- 2 Staff tried to **engage families early** in the school year and believed that family was very important to their programs, particularly as many staff had multiple children from the same family come to their program. Staff also **cherished the relationships they have maintained** with families over the years and enjoyed receiving updates about former students throughout their lives.
- 3 Prior to joining SPP, many staff from this site did not **use a formal curriculum** in their classrooms and often found their own materials. They believed that their transition to SPP, though not free of challenges, made them **more effective** in the classroom and provided them with a **much-desired professional network**.
- 4 Staff shared that **leveraging staff meetings** and keeping a **consistent but flexible schedule** helped them implement the curriculum and create high-quality learning environments while **minimizing classroom disruptions** and helping children **develop independence**.
- 5 Staff **appreciated the training and coaching resources** they received from DEEL. They believed **training related to the curriculum was critical** to success in transitioning to SPP and that **trainings focused on the business aspects** of their programs were also helpful.
- 6 Staff were very appreciative of their **SPP coach's willingness to meet their needs**—either through **individualized professional development** or **flexibility with coaching times**. However, they feared that an increasing workload would reduce the amount of time they have with their coach. They also desired **more alignment** between the different sources of coaching they receive.
- 7 Generally, the **classroom environment offered ample evidence of equity-focused practices**, including a variety of toys, art materials, and books. Staff made sure to **engage children in conversations about human difference** and made it a point to encourage children to **use their home language**.

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