



April 2, 2020

Dear Superintendent Juneau and Seattle Public Schools Board of Directors,

Seattle Education Association (SEA) is issuing you this letter as a direct result of actions taken by district leadership related to the child care mandate. Last night, the District sent an email to certain SEA represented members (paraprofessionals, SAEOPs, substitutes, and non-classroom certificated teachers under the age of 60) stating that these employees had all been deemed “essential” and directing them to sign up for a 5-day shift to provide child care. This communication came through at 8 pm while our SEA representatives were in the middle of a special Representative Assembly to discuss our work during the closure. This District communication does not represent a negotiated agreement between SEA and SPS on child care. In fact, SEA presented SPS with a proposal on 3/31 (attached here) that clearly outlined our member needs around providing child care. Rather than work together to find a solution on key pieces of the proposal, SPS responded with “no” and moved forward on imposing a plan outside of the required bargaining process.

SEA has asked the district for additional information around expectations for members tasked with providing care, the daily plan for activities, and survey results from parents that demonstrate community need for these services. As of the district email last night, some of that information has still not been provided. SEA rejects the SPS child care plan as presented as it does not address all of the needs of our members. The demand for SEA members to provide child care during a stay at home order due to the pandemic is outside the normal job duties for SEA members, and is a demand that carries with it inherent health and safety risks. For the District to place these demands on its employees with knowledge of the safety impacts, without exploring every possible alternative and committing to fully engage in good-faith bargaining with SEA is unconscionable.

We are aware that SPS and the City of Seattle have been engaged in difficult conversations around funding and that the City stated to the District that SPS would either need to provide child care or lose levy funding for the valuable Pre-K programs that serve Seattle’s most high-needs and marginalized students. Losing this funding would not only jeopardize the jobs of many SEA members during this time of crisis, it would remove critical early educational support for students. This pressure by the City is contributing to unfair labor demands on SEA members.

SEA expects the Mayor and the District to identify more appropriate methods for staffing childcare centers, including supporting the many community based professional childcare providers that are currently struggling. Many of these neighborhood community based childcare providers are operated by women and people of color and are being negatively impacted during this pandemic. SEA is committed to partnering with the District and the City of Seattle to identify funding and support for our community childcare professionals to provide these critical services to our first responders during this global healthcare crisis. It is our goal to find every opportunity to allow these licensed child care providers to continue to provide this work, and allow our educators to continue effective teaching and support to our students.

SEA recognizes the sacrifice that our first responders are making for the greater community during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that there is a need for child care to be provided for these essential workers and their children. Educators are dedicated to their students, and the front line workers in this public health crisis. Many SEA members have expressed interest in supporting these efforts and have already signed up to volunteer to provide child care. SEA educators will continue to do our part, but do not accept the terms of the child care mandate as proposed by SPS.

Sincerely,

Michael Tamayo, President
Gwendolyn Jimerson, Vice President
Vallerie Fisher, Treasurer
Marquita Prinzing, Director of CRE
Micheal Melonson, Paraprofessional President
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