

March 2016

Dear Blazing Trails' Families,

Seattle is growing, and Seattle Public Schools (SPS) is running out of classroom space due to increased enrollment and state mandated reductions in class size (which require more classrooms). We deeply appreciate your understanding and patience as we work through the complexities associated with the capacity management challenges we face as a community and their potential impact on childcare, preschool providers and families. Last year, the School Board prioritized space based on our constitutional obligation to provide K-12 education first, our commitment to preschool second, and childcare third. School and community partnerships which support children outside the school day are an important element to K-12 education, and our goal is to sustain such relationships whenever possible.

In October 2015, the district sent a letter to all district partners including your child's childcare and/or preschool provider, alerting them of potential impacts to the provider's dedicated space (space used during school hours) for the upcoming 2016-2017 school year. We also communicated that if they were to be impacted, partners would receive notification as quickly as possible. In order to ensure we are working with the most accurate data, our space analysis and capacity management recommendations are provided after our February 1st preliminary enrollment projections are completed.

Today, we informed school principals and your child's childcare/preschool provider that they need to make alternative plans for the upcoming school year. The dedicated space they have been using is needed for a K-5 classroom in 2016-2017. We anticipate that all providers notified today will need to move from their dedicated space by July 1, 2016.

Over the next few weeks the district will be working with the school site, principal, and providers to review any possible space in the school that will work for before and after school care. Our intent is to preserve onsite childcare whenever possible. We are hopeful that we may be able to find multiuse space (e.g. gyms and cafeterias) within our buildings that is licensable and will work for our childcare providers. Preschool requires dedicated space during the school day so our solutions are very limited, but we will work closely with the City Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) to support providers as they transition services into any potential community sites.

We are very sensitive to the impact any uncertainty could have on you, your child and family, regardless of the outcome. In the days ahead, we recommend families communicate directly with their providers to receive the most up to date information about the status of their program for the 2016-2017 school year.

In closing, I want to express my appreciation for your concern over capacity challenges and potential loss of childcare and or preschool services at your child's school. How providers and partners serve our families, in or out of our schools, will need to evolve in the near future and we look forward to working with you and others to find opportunities that support students, families and the full community.

Sincerely,

Flip Herndon
Associate Superintendent
Facilities & Operations

Next Steps

We will continue to revise our enrollment projections based on open enrollment (which is the opportunity for families to select schools outside their assigned attendance area) and again after school opens in the fall. While our projections are historically very accurate (about 99%), we cannot predict our exact classroom needs with 100% predictability in advance of the school year.

Meanwhile, there are ways families can participate in finding positive solutions. We have been inspired by the collaboration and mutual commitment of providers, partners and families in looking for viable options. The following are some things families may consider:

- Offer assistance to your childcare and or preschool provider to help identify possible solutions within the school building or community which may be an option. In the next few months providers will be meeting with facility and school staff to audit the school spaces and determine if there are viable solutions onsite.
- Help share information with other families about the potential loss of childcare and preschool services at the school site to ensure all of the school community is aware of these changes. Your help is critical in this effort.
- Provide a positive climate for shared ideas and solutions. Our capacity management challenges are a community challenge; not simply a district challenge. Having community discussions which are solution based is a positive way to facilitate dialogue and positive actions

Updates will continue to be posted on the district website as more information becomes available. Please visit www.seattleschools.org