SPS Statement: Response to SEA Regarding Childcare

SEATTLE – This morning, the Seattle Education Association Rep Assembly forwarded a resolution to its members, urging them to not sign up for SPS-provided childcare for health professionals and first responders.

In response, Seattle Public Schools is providing this statement:

During this time of global crisis, Seattle Public Schools continues to put our students and families first as we continue to look for ways to help our community.

Governor Jay Inslee directed school districts statewide to help provide childcare for health workers and first responders who are on the frontlines of our community’s COVID-19 response. SPS jumped in to help, while also keeping focus on our mission to ensure our students have access to food and continuous learning during this time.

To comply with the Governor’s request, we sent communication to hospitals and first responders; we developed a staff/student safety guide following Public Health – Seattle & King County guidelines; and we set up to provide free space for nearly 450 children.

The city of Seattle made it a requirement that in order to keep our PreK city levy funding, the district must provide childcare with our educational staff. We asked members of our educators’ union, the Seattle Education Association (SEA), to sign up to support this effort.

We understand that educators and childcare workers are two separate professions. SEA has concerns about providing this care, and we understand. SPS has made the decision to withdraw our request to our educators that they sign up to support the effort. We will continue to ask our educators to focus on providing students with continuous learning in creative ways.
Our district was asked to step up in an unprecedented way to respond to COVID-19, and we will continue to work with the city and other providers to find ways to partner to provide childcare for health care workers and other first responders.

Student, staff and community safety continues to be our top priority. Our community needs our local leaders to work together to problem-solve and to find solutions that work for our families and community. We are urging city leaders to continue funding community-based organizations to provide this childcare, while the school district will provide space, food and cleaning.

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