



PRESCHOOL NEEDS ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIES

City Council, February 11, 2025

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that City Council:

1. Review the childcare needs analysis report about potential strategies to enhance enrollment and financial sustainability at City-run preschool facilities (Attachment A)
2. Provide direction to City staff on which of the potential strategies to develop for additional City Council review and potential implementation
3. Staff anticipates bringing back City Council's identified implementation strategies for City Council review in the context of the fiscal year 2025-26 budget deliberations.



EARLY LEARNING & CARE FINAL REPORT

CITY OF MENLO PARK + SOLUTIONARY ADIVSORS

SOLUTIONARY ADVISORS TEAM



Erik Burmeister has 25 years of experience in education, including as Superintendent of Menlo Park School District. He is a nationally recognized expert in using human-centered design to lead systemic change.



Katherine Carter is an accomplished educational reformer and school designer with over 25 years of experience as a teacher, principal, and central office leader from Preschool to 12th grade.



Tricia Singleton has 20+ years of global youth organization senior leadership experience focusing on strategic planning, program design, operations, and project management.



Marissa McGee has over 15 years of experience in the education sector. Growing up in the Belle Haven neighborhood and being a Kindergarten teacher bring insight to this project. She is the author of the children's book, *Free the Curls*.

GOALS & OUTCOMES

DRIVING QUESTION

How might the City of Menlo Park's early care and learning programs better meet the evolving needs of the community while ensuring the financial sustainability of the programs?



METHODOLOGY

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

1. Contextual & historical analysis and forecasting for early care.
2. Early learning services ecosystem review and analysis.
3. City-designed and executed early learning and care needs survey.
4. Community coalition building.
5. Comprehensive Analysis, Report, and Potential Strategies

1

Preparation

- Define project goals and plan
- Gather initial historical/contextual data
- Create survey and interview questions
- Schedule interviews with stakeholders

2

Research & Feedback

- MCC and BHCDC Staff & Families
- Local Preschool Directors
- Demographics, WFH, Pandemic & TK
- Childcare advocates

3

Analysis & Recommendations

- Analyze historical & contextual data
- Compile survey, interview, focus group findings
- Identify critical factors for action
- Develop data-driven recommendations

PRESCHOOL LANDSCAPE

What factors have changed the preschool landscape across the Bay Area, California, and nationally?

NATIONAL, STATE AND COUNTY CONTEXT



Universal TK for 4-year olds and eventually 3-year olds is the most significant factor impacting preschool enrollment.

COVID-19 pandemic is still having a financial and societal impact on preschools and families.

Remote work is continuing to shift the childcare needs and choices of young families.

Birth rates are declining in San Mateo County and Menlo Park.

County wide initiatives are taking place to support early care.

LOCAL DATA ANALYSIS

How have the broader factors impacted preschool in Menlo Park and adjacent communities?

MENLO PARK EARLY LEARNING FINDINGS

METHODOLOGY

Community Needs Survey

627 respondents, 413 comments

Preschool Director Interviews

10 local schools

Center Staff & Family Focus Groups

30 people in 4 groups

Community Childcare Advocates

San Mateo County, Community Equity Collaborative, Ravenswood ECE Collaborative

COMMON THEMES

Affordability

Flexible Scheduling

Infant Care

Toddler Care

Communication of Quality

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

Based on the analysis, what are the high-leverage strategies that the City of Menlo Park should consider to increase enrollment & meet the community's expressed needs?

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES BASED ON COMMUNITY NEEDS

1

Affordability

- Sliding scale fees
- Discounts for City employees and educators
- Cooperative Care

3

Toddler and Infant Care

- Open space for 2-year olds
- Open space for 18-mo-olds
- Add infant care

2

Flexible Scheduling

- Schedule choice
- Drop in care

4

Communicating Quality Care

- Update website
- Community Events
- Marketing materials
- City Channel marketing

1 AFFORDABILITY

STRATEGY	BHCDC	MCC	IMPACT	EFFORT	TIME FRAME
Create sliding scale fee assistance for middle-income	X	X	High	High	Mid-term
Institute discounts for city employees and educators		X	Low	Medium	Mid-term
Create a “cooperative” childcare option		X	Medium	High	Long-term

2 FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING

STRATEGY	BHCDC	MCC	IMPACT	EFFORT	TIME FRAME
Allow families to choose days/schedules		X	High	Medium	Short-term
Earlier drop off and later pick-up	X	X	Medium	High	Mid-term

3 TODDLER AND INFANT CARE

STRATEGY	BHCDC	MCC	IMPACT	EFFORT	TIME FRAME
Open space for 2-year-olds	X	X	High	High	Mid term
Open space for 18-month-olds	X	X	High	High	Mid term
Add infant care	X	X	High	High	Long term

4

COMMUNICATING QUALITY CARE

STRATEGY	BHCDC	MCC	IMPACT	EFFORT	TIME FRAME
Update the website	X	X	Medium	Low	Short-term
Host community events	X	X	Medium	Medium	Short-term
Update marketing material	X	X	Medium	Low	Short-term
Utilize existing city channels to “tell the story”	X	X	Medium	Low	Short-term

NEXT STEPS

How will the City of Menlo Park measure “success” and what continuous improvement steps will assist the City in achieving its goals?

WHAT'S NEXT

- Select strategies for implementation
- Determine budgetary and staffing impact
- Set goals and determine success metrics
- Implement selected strategies
- Review progress towards goal
- Adjust as needed





CITY COUNCIL DIRECTION SOUGHT

Staff seeks City Council direction on which potential strategies to further develop for potential implementation:

- A. Create more flexible scheduling options at MCC
- B. Enhance consumer awareness of City-run preschools through marketing techniques
- C. Create a sliding scale that provides tuition assistance to middle-income families who do not qualify for other income-based tuition assistance
- D. Institute discounts for city employees and local educators
- E. Create a “cooperative” childcare option for some families
- F. Expand to provide care to 2-year-olds at BHCDC
- G. Increase slots for 18-month-olds at MCC
- H. Add infant care (younger than 18 months) at MCC and/or BHCDC.



THANK YOU