



Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR
February 25, 2014

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Children, Youth & Recreation Commission
 Submitted by: Rebecca Gebhart, Chair, Children, Youth & Recreation Commission
 Subject: Funding for an Expanded Pre-K Power Play Program (Power Play)

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager to identify funding for an expansion of the Pre-K Power Play Program from 300 to 500 families, at a total program cost of \$437,000 per year.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Over 3.5 years, between 2009 and 2013, First 5 Alameda County provided approximately \$75,000 per year to the City of Berkeley in grant funding to offset the total program cost of approximately \$200,000 per year. This level of funding allowed the City to reach approximately 300 families per year. The First 5 funding was a “capacity grant” designed to assist the City in developing the capacity to sustain program funding after grant expiration. The grant expired in June 2013. The City now bears the full cost of implementing the program.

With an expansion of the program to 500 families per year, the City estimates the total program cost at approximately \$437,000 per year, inclusive of new costs for evaluation and expanded programming for families with children aged 0-2.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Why?

The goals of the 2020 Vision will be realized through a deliberate investment in early childhood. Power Play has had demonstrated results, and reaches the Berkeley children most at risk of arriving at Kindergarten with a readiness gap: very and somewhat low-income families that do not have the resources to attend formal pre-school, as well as families with family-member care providers. Program evaluation shows that Power Play participants’ results are similar to the results of children entering BUSD from preschool programs.

What is Power Play?

Power Play is a successful kindergarten readiness program for children aged 0-5 with three strategy components:

1. 10-week pre-K sessions focusing on self-regulation, cognitive flexibility and working memory, and social, emotional and academic development;
2. Facilitated 90 minute drop-in playgroup sessions for children and their parents/caregivers; and
3. Parenting education workshop programs focusing on kindergarten readiness (literacy, child development, how to prepare children, how to enroll and what to expect), community resources and nutrition, including linkage with City and School District resources.

Building on Success

The Parks Recreation & Waterfront Department initiated the program with 3.5 years of grant funding from First 5 Alameda County. Through careful partnership with First 5, the department developed the program with a very deliberative, and evidence-based model which includes well-trained staff, developmentally appropriate curriculum and program materials, regular program monitoring, and intentional outreach to the most at-risk families in the City. While the First 5 funding has ended, the City has continued funding the program directly. Most recently, Lawrence Hall of Science was awarded a First 5 grant to partner with Power Play to enhance the social/emotional and academic development of participants by providing LHS classes to children, parent education, field trips and staff training.

The Power Play program has been identified by First 5 staff as a very strong program with excellent outcomes.

What exactly do we want?

The CYRC subcommittee has met with Department staff for a deeper discussion of the program, and recommends expansion of Power Play to serve 500 families in 2014, a significant increase over the current capacity of 300 families. In addition, the CYRC recommends the expansion of the Power Play program and its staffing and administration to include support groups for parents of infants from birth on. We want to build on our current capacity and expand the program from serving 300 families per year to serving 500 families per year.

Why is this important and how will it advance the goals of the 2020 Vision?

The 2020 Vision identifies the kindergarten readiness gap as a major obstacle to reducing the achievement gap in Berkeley.

Kindergarten readiness is a broad category, including pre-academic and early literacy skills, such as letter and word recognition, interest in books, and simple counting on fingers, as well as social/emotional skills, including an ability to share classroom materials, sit still for short periods of time, follow directions and focus on the teacher. Multiple studies have shown that “readiness gaps” measured in early kindergarten tend to grow over time, with the majority of children starting behind their peers, and falling further behind throughout the early elementary years. In addition, meeting the needs of

parents of infants reaches the City's most vulnerable children as early as possible and is critical for the support and promotion of healthy social-emotional development.

The Power Play program has, quite simply, demonstrated results that have the potential to significantly address the readiness gap in Berkeley. As described in the evaluation report (Attachment 1), children attending the 10-week program arrived at BUSD kindergarten with readiness similar to their peers who attended full-year preschool. While a long-term goal may be greater enrollment in preschool programs for at-risk children, the current supply is not sufficient. In addition, we know that some parents will still choose to keep their children at home for their preschool years. Power Play offers an alternative for parents who, by choice or not, have not enrolled their child in preschool.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on December 9, 2013, the Children, Youth & Recreation Commission unanimously adopted the recommendation to the City of Berkeley to identify funding to expand the Pre-K Power Play Program to reach 500 families.

M/S/C: (Gerstein/Gallegos-Diaz)

Ayes: Gallegos-Diaz, Gebhart, Gerstein, Issel, Kenney, Lawrence, Waldstein

Noes: None.

Abstain: None.

Absent: Smith; Taplin

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the recommendation of the Commission's report, and recommends that it be referred to the City's budget process. The City Manager notes that the Pre-K Power Play program's current annual cost is approximately \$200,516, funded by the City's General Fund. The Commission's request requires additional funding of approximately \$236,839 per year.

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