

Caring for K-5 students during COVID-19

Assembly Committee of the Whole

August 31, 2020



Staff Direction & Problem Statement

Task: Create a framework to care for K-5 children in the community in response to operational constraints at the Juneau School District

Problem Statement: The JSD has a range of operational strategies ranging from online education to full in person delivery. Anything other than normal school operations creates challenges to families who rely on care for their younger children (K-5) during the school day to work.



Objectives

A successful program or mix of programs would need to meet the following criteria:

- Ability to flex with changing school conditions
- Allow students to engage with learning initiatives
- Minimize disease risk
- Sustainable until school begins operating normally
- Acceptable to families, safe for children
- Fiscally prudent
- Provide support to low income families

Assumptions

- School may continue to be disrupted through the remainder of the school year.
- CARES funding is only available for use through December 31, 2020.
- Families will have different needs and care should be taken to offer a variety of options which might be applied to different situations.
- Communication should be tailored so that families recognize this is a community program that will require some level of sacrifice and cooperation amongst family groups.
- Care would be available for students enrolled in the Juneau School District.
- A fulltime emergency employee would be hired to coordinate and support all identified options – cost is approximately \$60,000.

Need

- JSD has 2,100 children enrolled in their K-5 programs.
- According to a recent survey conducted by the ESTF, roughly half of the households have a parent or other adult caretaker at home. The remaining households appear to need additional support. The district is unable to give us enrollment data by household.
- Priority for funding should be targeted to children and families who have the most economic/social vulnerability. Identification of families could be partially informed by enrollment in the free and reduced lunch program which currently serves 30% of elementary school families, approximately 620 students in the K-5 system.
- Low-income children are eligible to receive reduced-price or free meals at school. Children in households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level or those receiving SNAP or TANF qualify for free meals. Those with family incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty line qualify for reduced-price meals.

Framework Options

- Support for small family groupings for cooperative learning environments
- Expand RALLY services
- Provide monetary support for employer based childcare
- Provide monetary support for families who are learning at home

Note: other options were considered by the ESTF and ROCK groups. Staff reviewed those recommendations and determined that the options listed above were the most viable from an operational standpoint.

Support Family Cooperatives

Provide support to families looking to arrange learning cooperatives either in their homes, or if home is not an option, in other locations acceptable to the family groupings. Support could include assistance in pairing with other families, assistance in locating a physical space, and ongoing support to work through issues.

In this model, parents would partner with each other and take turns working with the child grouping. This would free up the other adults to return to work.

Support Family Cooperatives

# of children served	TBD
Estimated Cost	\$10,000
Facility Needs	Variable – if home based, no facility needed. If there is desire for cooperative that can not meet in the home, space may need to be sourced. If additional space is needed, there is a potential added cost.
Staffing Needs	Coordination of program structure and materials would be assigned to Childcare Coordinator who would work with one JSD staff person at each elementary school.
Other considerations	This option is low cost/high impact



Expand Rally Services

On August 31st, JSD will stand up fulltime RALLY at 3 school sites to serve 126 children. The program will operate between 7:30 and 5:30, M-F. The program could be expanded to all elementary school sites which would increase enrollment to 252.

During RALLY, children would have access to online learning.

Families are normally charged for RALLY care with lower income families having access to childcare assistance. In this model, costs have been presented as if RALLY care would be provided at the same cost as normally charged for before and after school care.

JSD has set the cost of full time RALLY at \$310 per week.



Expand Rally Services

# of children served	Planned Current – 126, Proposed Expanded - 252
Estimated Cost	\$280,000 per month for the expanded program. Costs could be offset through parental tuition in whole or part.
Facility Needs	None. JSD facilities would be used.
Staffing Needs	Staff to child ratio is 2:14 JSD is currently staffed to offer RALLY for 126 children. The expanded model would require an additional 18 – 20 staff.
Other considerations	<p>There are no childcare licensing requirements for RALLY as services are provided at the school district. If this model was expanded to other locations, licensing would be a complicating factor.</p> <p>RALLY spaces could be prioritized for essential workers and/or families that are unable to have an adult at home during the day.</p> <p>JSD has requested that their staff be prioritized for RALLY spaces (at no cost) so that teachers and other staff are fully available to run online learning.</p>

Support Employer Childcare Options

Employers could be encouraged to set up childcare spaces at work locations. These could follow a parent cooperative model or paid staff could be engaged to provide care.

Employers currently may deduct childcare expenses as a business expense and apply for a tax credit of 25% of childcare expenses up to \$150,000 (IRS 8882). Employers with onsite care are not required to obtain state licenses provided the employee is on site while their child is in care.

CBJ could offer an incentive to employers to provide care or employers could charge parents a fee for care. CBJ could also partner with larger employers to directly offset cost of care when the employer provides the facility space. Similar to providing a RALLY type program.



Support Employer Childcare Options

# of children served	TBD (cost estimates use 150)
Estimated Cost	\$52,500 per month
Facility Needs	Employer would provide facility
Staffing Needs	None – a per child stipend would be paid to employers to provide care.
Other considerations	<p>Facility space would have to allow for appropriate social distancing and internet connectivity for online learning and comply with reasonable adult to child ratios.</p> <p>Unless the site is licensed for childcare, employees would need to be physically onsite during hours of operation.</p> <p>Some level of support could be provided by the Childcare Coordinator position to help businesses navigate how to set up an onsite program.</p>



Provide Monetary Supplement for at Home Care

Provide a monetary supplement to families who meet the income thresholds for the free or reduced lunch program. Parents would qualify for a stipend to help offset the cost of providing care at home.

Full payment could be provided to families who meet the income qualifications for the free lunch program, with a prorated amount for families who qualify for the reduced lunch program.

Children in households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level or those receiving SNAP or TANF qualify for free meals. Those with family incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty line qualify for reduced-price meals.

Provide Monetary Supplement for at Home Care

# of children served	400
Estimated Cost	\$140,000 per month
Facility Needs	None, care happens at home
Staffing Needs	Supervision of children is provided by family
Other considerations	Payments would only be made to families not using other K-5 supported services. Coordination could be complicated Would be available to all families, not just families with students enrolled through JSD.

	# of students	PC/PM	Sept - Dec	Jan - May	Total
K-5 Care Coordinator			26,000	32,500	58,500
Family Cooperative Coordination					
Materials			8,000	2,000	10,000
Facility Costs					
Total		0	8,000	2,000	10,000
RALLY Program					
Staffing		1,111	1,120,000	1,400,000	2,520,000
Revenue Collected		-500	-500,000	-625,000	-1,125,000
Total	252	611	620,000	775,000	1,395,000
Employer Provided Childcare					
Program Payments	150	350	210,000	262,500	472,500
Monetary Supplements for at Home Care					
Payments	400	350	560,000	700,000	1,260,000
Framework Costs - Total	802		1,424,000	1,772,000	3,196,000

Recommended Next Steps

With Assembly Approval and Direction:

- Hire temporary K-5 Childcare Coordinator
- Develop support materials and organizational structure for Family Cooperatives
- Conduct tailored survey for families with K-5 students to determine actual need and interest in the various options
- Survey Employers to determine interest in providing onsite childcare
- Assess further action once survey information is gathered.

Note: K-5 classes will be online at least until the end of the first trimester which is November 6, 2020