

March 18, 2015

Preschool staff Concerns:

Brief Description of Early Intervention/Preschool Special Education Services:

Preschool Special Education provides Early Intervention Services for children between the ages of 3-5 who qualify for services in various developmental domains. Domains include motor (fine and gross), cognitive, adaptive, communication, and social and emotional.

Unlike regular elementary school teachers, preschool special education teachers are responsible for supervising the delivery of services in all of these areas with students affected by developmental delays and/or moderate-to-severe learning disabilities.

Caseloads require teachers to supervise up to 10 students with special needs and 4 typically developing students who serve as models for special needs children. Each teacher has one teacher assistant in the classroom and supervises 14 children per session (AM and PM).

- *Consider many of these children need a teacher's full attention to ensure their safety. If more than 2 children require their hands held it becomes difficult to transition safely.*
- *Many of the children are not fully toilet trained and require being changed or taught how to use a toilet at school. When children have accidents class supervision is compromised.*
- *Many of the children cannot verbally communicate their wants and needs and use other means to communicate (i.e. screaming, hitting, scratching, biting, head banging, etc.) or do nothing unless initiated by an adult. These students need constant attention/prompts.*
- *Many children with autism are very sensitive to the normal sights, sounds, temperatures or textures around them. They are easily overwhelmed and become upset and aggressive.*
- *Many children start the program at age three with no prior school experience. If children have never been to school they need extensive support to adapt to being away from home.*

Highline Fails to Provide Appropriate Supports for Special Education Students:

- Teachers in Highline have a higher teacher-to-student ratio (2 adults to 14 children) than any other district in the surrounding area including Federal Way, Kent, Renton, Auburn, and Seattle (see attached for a comparison to the other districts in the area).
- Students with Autism receive extra services to improve educational outcomes. In Highline this program is not supervised by a teacher for safety, quality, or control.
- The district proposes to assess students using a new assessment tool, TS Gold. This will significantly add to the teacher's workload w/out being reflected in the contract.
- Teachers are required to serve additional students who serve as peer models. Peer students are not included in the contract and are not financially supported.

We know early intervention works! We've seen it! But how can we provide truly effective early intervention strategies when we have to choose between child safety and instruction?

Please help us build an effective and nurturing program that will help us serve our students in the years to come. These children deserve a safe **and** effective educational environment.

Thank you.