



# The Bell Policy Center

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## ***Colorado Preschool Program is effective and should be expanded to serve more children***

- *Colorado Preschool Program puts children on path to success*
- *Research shows program's effectiveness*

By Evie Hudak  
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### **Executive summary**

High-quality preschool puts children on a path to success. It provides a positive start to school and is the first step on a journey that prepares students to reach their full potential, enriching their lives and strengthening our state's workforce and its economy.

The Colorado Preschool Program provides quality early childhood education for children most likely to start school unprepared. It serves more than 20,000 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds who face risk factors such as poverty, homelessness, need for language development, poor social skills and having a parent without a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Decades of research has shown that preschool and programs like CPP are effective at improving school readiness and closing achievement gaps for at-risk students. CPP students catch up with or exceed their non-at-risk peers on measures of school readiness. When compared to other at-risk students, CPP students score 10 to 15 percentage points higher on CSAP/TCAP tests and are less likely to be held back in early grades and placed in special-education programs. CPP graduates in Denver Public Schools scored at or above the level of the rest of the students on the 11th-grade ACT test. The positive aspects of preschool extend to future generations as students go on to raise their families in better circumstances, helping to break the cycle of poverty.

However, funding for CPP has not kept pace with the need. Based on demographic and educational data, the Colorado Department of Education estimates that CPP is funded to serve only about six out of 10 eligible 4-year-olds. Although the state has made strides recently to close this gap, in school year 2014-15, CPP is serving only 15,869 out of 27,072 of the 4-year-olds estimated to be eligible. The legislature and governor should make the needed investments to ensure that all students in Colorado who are eligible to participate in CPP have the opportunity to do so. Over the long run, there are few investments that would be better for our children's and our state's future.

This issue brief provides an overview of the Colorado Preschool Program, examines its effectiveness, reviews the research on preschool and makes recommendations for expanding and strengthening Colorado's effort to help its at-risk children thrive and succeed.



## **CPP: Effective, worthy of expansion**

### **Overview of the Colorado Preschool Program**

In 1988, the Colorado General Assembly created the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) because it recognized the urgent need for quality early childhood education for children most likely to start school unprepared. The program provides publicly funded preschool for at least 10 hours per week (half-day) during the school year. CPP is intended to promote school readiness, improve academic success and lower dropout rates.<sup>1</sup>

CPP serves 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds who experience risk factors in their daily lives. To be eligible for the program at age 3, children must experience at least three factors that put them at risk of school failure, and they may be eligible to participate in the program for two years, as long as the risk factors are still present. To be eligible for the program at age 4 or 5, children must experience at least one risk factor and be eligible to enter into kindergarten the year following participation in CPP.<sup>2</sup>

The risk factors include the following (see Figure 1):<sup>3</sup>

- Having an abusive adult present in the home
- Drug or alcohol abuse in the family
- Homelessness
- Either parent under 18 years old and unmarried at the time of child's birth
- Frequent relocation of the family's residence
- Classified as neglected or dependent (foster-care children)
- A parent without a high school diploma or its equivalent
- Poor social skills
- Needing language development skills
- Eligible for free or reduced-cost meals

Participation in CPP is voluntary by school district, and 174 of 178 Colorado districts, as well as the Charter School Institute, are participating in the program in the 2014-15 school year.<sup>4</sup>

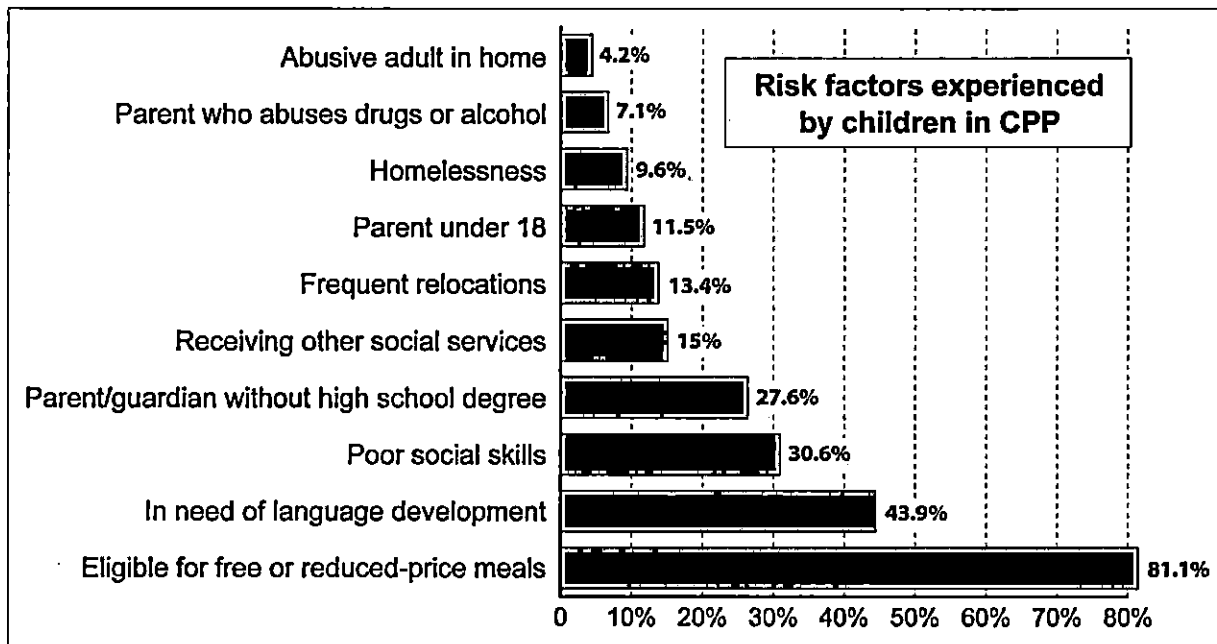
School districts must apply to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to participate in CPP. Their application must address the need to serve at-risk children, the ability to collaborate within the community to assure effective use of resources and the ability to provide the required quality elements. Districts must reapply annually to continue in the program.<sup>5</sup>

Districts are required to form a district advisory council for CPP, unless there is already an early childhood council serving the community that can perform this role. The advisory councils ensure that decisions about CPP are made locally and that major stakeholders have input. The councils make recommendations to the local school board about identifying eligible children and selecting the early childhood providers to which the slots are allocated. Providers must present justification for the children they want to serve, using comprehensive assessments with a variety of approaches, including "parent interviews, observations of children in natural settings, collection of demographic data, standardized developmental screenings, and vision and hearing screenings."<sup>7</sup> CPP advisory councils are encouraged to work with community partners, including Head Start, to provide families with choices that best meet their needs.



## CPP: Effective, worthy of expansion

Figure 1 – Percent of All CPP Children With Each Risk Factor



Source: Colorado Preschool Program Legislative Report, 2013.<sup>6</sup>

Because of this system, CPP varies from district to district. For the 2012-13 school year, 70 percent of children were enrolled in programs in district schools, 9 percent in Head Start programs, and 21 percent in community (private) settings.<sup>8</sup> District advisory councils often have little choice about the location of their CPP classrooms because of the limited space in school buildings, lack of Head Start programs in the community and/or lack of early childhood providers in the community. Other factors affecting availability are whether providers are willing to serve CPP students and whether there are providers that meet the quality requirements of CPP.<sup>9</sup>

CPP is funded at half the amount of per-pupil revenue that districts receive for other students; this amount is determined and appropriated each year through the formula in the School Finance Act.<sup>10</sup> The total funding for the CPP program in 2013-14 was a little more than \$79 million and is a little over \$99 million for the 2014-15 school year.<sup>11</sup> This amount has grown because of an increase in the number of CPP slots as well as an increase in per-pupil funding.<sup>12</sup> The average funding per CPP slot is currently \$3,510<sup>13</sup> – compared with the national average of state preschool spending of \$4,596 per half-day slot.<sup>14</sup>

### Students served and the need for CPP

From the program’s creation in 1988 through the 2013-14 school year, more than 278,000 Colorado children had been served by CPP.<sup>15</sup> However, the program funds placements – referred to as “slots” – rather than children, because districts may choose to use single slots for half-day preschool or double slots for full-day preschool. Since the 2008-09 school year, CPP enrollment has been capped at 20,160 slots. At least 95 percent of these slots are designated for half-day, but



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individual districts may use more than 5 percent of their slots as full-day as long as the statewide total is 5 percent or less.<sup>16</sup>

In 2013, the School Finance Act added the Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) program to CPP, which provides additional slots that can be used for half-day or full-day preschool or added to the half-day of kindergarten regularly funded by the state to provide full-day kindergarten. ECARE funded 3,200 slots for the 2012-13 school year and 5,000 more for the 2013-14 school year. In the first year of ECARE, about 53 percent of the slots were used for preschool; however, in the second year, far fewer were used for preschool. Altogether, a little less than 41 percent of the ECARE slots – 4,824 of the 8,200 – are being used for preschool as shown in Table 1.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 1 – ECARE Slots Used for Full-day K and Preschool 2013-14 and 2014-15**

	2013-14	Percent	2014-15	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>Full-day K</b>	1,509	47%	3,523	70%	4,824	59%
<b>Preschool</b>	1,691	53%	1,477	30%	3,376	41%
<b>Total slots</b>	3,200		5,000		8,200	

Source: Colorado Department of Education<sup>18</sup>

The need for the Colorado Preschool Program is substantial. CDE does an annual calculation of the unmet need for CPP based on data from the State Demography Office and state pupil counts of students on free and reduced-cost lunch, subtracting children served by Head Start. Based on this analysis, CPP is estimated to serve only about 60 percent of the 4-year-olds that qualify. This calculation includes an estimate of students qualified for CPP with factors other than poverty, which according to information from districts, averages about 19 percent.<sup>19</sup> The additional ECARE slots reduced the number of unserved students by 2,307 in school year 2014-15.<sup>20</sup> As a result, CPP is serving 15,869 of the 4-year-olds out of a projected 27,072 who are qualified for it.<sup>21</sup>

### Effectiveness of the Colorado Preschool Program

Using a variety of measurements, CPP has proven to be a very successful program:

**School readiness.** The Results Matter assessments, which monitor school readiness in a comprehensive way, have demonstrated that CPP improves school readiness and closes the achievement gap for at-risk students. Compared with their tuition-paying, non-CPP peers, students in CPP either catch up fully or exceed these peers by the end of the preschool year.<sup>22</sup> Compared with a national norm sample of children, CPP 3- and 4-year-olds begin the preschool year anywhere from 15 to 50 percentage points lower in the various school readiness domains and either catch up fully, exceed or are only behind by 2 to 10 percentage points by the end of the year. For example, in the 2011-12 school year the 4-year-olds that participated in CPP closed the gap in social-emotional development, physical development and cognitive development. They



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were within 2-4 percentage points of the national norm for language development and literacy and about 12 percentage points below for mathematics.<sup>23</sup>

**Quality ratings.** CPP providers may choose to receive a quality rating through Qualistar Colorado or be accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Many providers do not choose to do either. About 27 percent of CPP sites have chosen to receive a Qualistar rating, of which 93 percent were rated with 3 or 4 stars, the highest quality ratings. About 5 percent have received NAEYC accreditation.<sup>24</sup>

**Colorado K-12 assessments.** Assessments given to all K-12 students in Colorado show that the academic advantages of CPP extend much further than kindergarten readiness and do not “fade out” (that is, they do not diminish). Student outcomes in literacy in grades 1 through 3 confirm the positive impact of CPP. Various early literacy assessments show that about 60 percent of children who are in CPP for one year and about 70 percent of children who are in CPP for two years are at or above grade level.<sup>25</sup> Longitudinal results of CPP students in grades 3 through 7 on CSAP/TCAP show that they score consistently 10 to 15 percent higher than non-CPP at-risk students, although they are still about 5 to 8 percent below the statewide average.<sup>26</sup> Tracking of CPP students in Denver Public Schools through 11<sup>th</sup> grade, when they took the ACT college entrance exam, showed that former CPP students scored at the same level or above the rest of the students in the district.<sup>27</sup>

**Other state indicators of success.** Another aspect of CPP’s success is that the rate of its students held back at any point in early grade school is cut by as much as half.<sup>28</sup> Also, a study estimated that due to CPP, 1,300 at-risk children over a five-year period were able to avoid placement in special-education programs because they received early childhood education; overall, this saved Colorado school districts \$22.8 million over that period.<sup>29</sup> Further, research indicates that the positive outcomes for CPP participants will continue as they go on to raise their own families in better circumstances, breaking the cycle of poverty and its accompanying disadvantages.

**Outside rating of effectiveness.** The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University’s Graduate School of Education conducts a study each year on the funding, access and policies of state-funded preschool programs. The report compares each state’s program standards against a checklist of 10 quality standards benchmarks. In the 2013 report, the most recent one available, Colorado ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> of the 50 states and met six of the 10 benchmarks.<sup>30</sup> The NIEER benchmarks that CPP meets are those most relevant for providing quality education:

- Comprehensive early learning standards
- Teacher specialized training
- Small class size
- Small staff-child ratios
- Adequate monitoring
- Teacher in-service<sup>31</sup>

One important benchmark that Colorado does not meet is teacher and teacher assistant qualifications. NIEER recommends that all teachers earn a bachelor’s degree and that assistants



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earn a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.<sup>32</sup> Currently, Colorado requires only that teachers have two education courses in the field of early childhood, although CPP does recommend that all teachers have at least a CDA, a Child Care Professional Credential or an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development.<sup>33</sup> One reason Colorado has not been able to meet NIEER's teacher-preparation standards is that prior to 2012, there were no B.A. programs in early childhood education approved by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.

The other benchmarks that Colorado does not meet are related to items outside CPP's mission, and while valuable, they are not as directly related to classroom instruction:

- Providing screening and referral for vision, hearing and health and at least one support service. However, CPP does provide health services for parents and children; nutrition information; referral for social services; information about and referral for immunizations and dental care; and a variety of parent education, support and involvement activities.<sup>34</sup>
- Providing at least one meal per day. Most CPP programs are half-day (open for 2.5 hours a day), and are not required to provide a meal. Those CPP programs that meet longer are required to serve the children a meal that meets at least one-third of their nutritional needs for every four hours per day that students are in the program.<sup>35</sup>

### Research shows the value of preschool

There is strong evidence that economically disadvantaged children reap long-term benefits from preschool.<sup>36</sup> The reason is that "what happens in early childhood is the foundation for everything that follows. By age 5, as much as 90 percent of a child's intellectual and emotional brain wiring has been set for life. When a young child's life is marked by poverty and deprivation, the brain fails to grow at its optimum rate, and the damage can be long-lasting. Early nurturing experiences fire the synapses that determine intelligence and behavior."<sup>37</sup> A study done in 1969 suggested that the benefits of preschool fade out, but it pertained only to Head Start, and it has since been refuted.<sup>38</sup>

A longitudinal study of the **High Scope/Perry Preschool Project** in Michigan – similar to CPP, as both programs meet for 2.5 hours a day, have an 8:1 students to staff ratio, have similar curriculum and focus on parental involvement – showed that quality preschool can offset much of the damage from poverty and deprivation. Participants in the Perry Preschool Project had a significantly lower rate of crime and delinquency, as well as a lower incidence of teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency. By the age of 27, program participants were nearly three times more likely to own their own homes than the control group and less than half as likely to be receiving public assistance. Furthermore, preschool participants were more likely to be employed at age 40 than those in the control group (76 percent vs. 62 percent), and they had higher median annual earnings at age 40 than those in the control group (\$20,800 versus \$15,300).<sup>39</sup>

A longitudinal study of **Chicago's Child-Parent Centers** – also similar to CPP – reported that \$3,000 per participant was saved in reduced welfare spending. Its participants had a 29 percent higher rate of high school completion than a comparison group of children who did not attend



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preschool, a 41 percent lower placement rate in special education, and a 40 percent lower rate of grade retention. Furthermore, preschool participants had a 33 percent lower rate of juvenile arrest and a 42 percent lower rate of arrest for a violent offense.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the study showed that individuals who had attended quality preschool programs were 70 percent less likely to be arrested for a violent crime by the age of 18.<sup>41</sup>

A study on **Protective Factors** by the Center for the Study of Social Policy found that quality preschool lessens dependence on public assistance and reduces criminal activities by lowering abuse and neglect rates in families. The study found that children in these programs had 52 percent fewer court petitions of maltreatment compared with peers who were not in preschool. This resulted from a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect, which came from several “protective factors”: The factors for families included parental resilience, an array of social connections, adequate knowledge of parenting and child development and support in times of need, including access to necessary services such as mental health. The key factor for children was their healthy social-emotional development.<sup>42</sup>

### Return on investment

Longitudinal studies on the benefits of preschool education have all shown that the benefits far outweigh the cost. In 2000, a cost-benefit analysis of the **High Scope/Perry Preschool Project** indicated a savings to the public of about seven times the initial investment per child. When adjusted for inflation and a 3 percent discount rate, the investment in early childhood education resulted in a taxpayer return of \$88,433 per child from increased tax revenue, higher earnings and savings to the criminal justice system, crime victims and in welfare assistance (prior to welfare reform).<sup>43</sup> After a 40-year followup of the participants of the program, the cost-benefit results showed a \$12.90 return per \$1.00 invested<sup>44</sup> (see Figure 2).

Also, investing in preschool produces a much higher return when compared with other public investments.<sup>45</sup> The **Committee for Economic Development (CED)**, an independent research and policy organization of business leaders and educators that proposes policies for steady economic growth, says that “preschool is far more cost effective than programs that correct educational and social problems in later years.”<sup>46</sup> CED says that high-quality preschool programs are a wise investment because they “contribute to America’s economic bottom line” in several ways:<sup>47</sup>

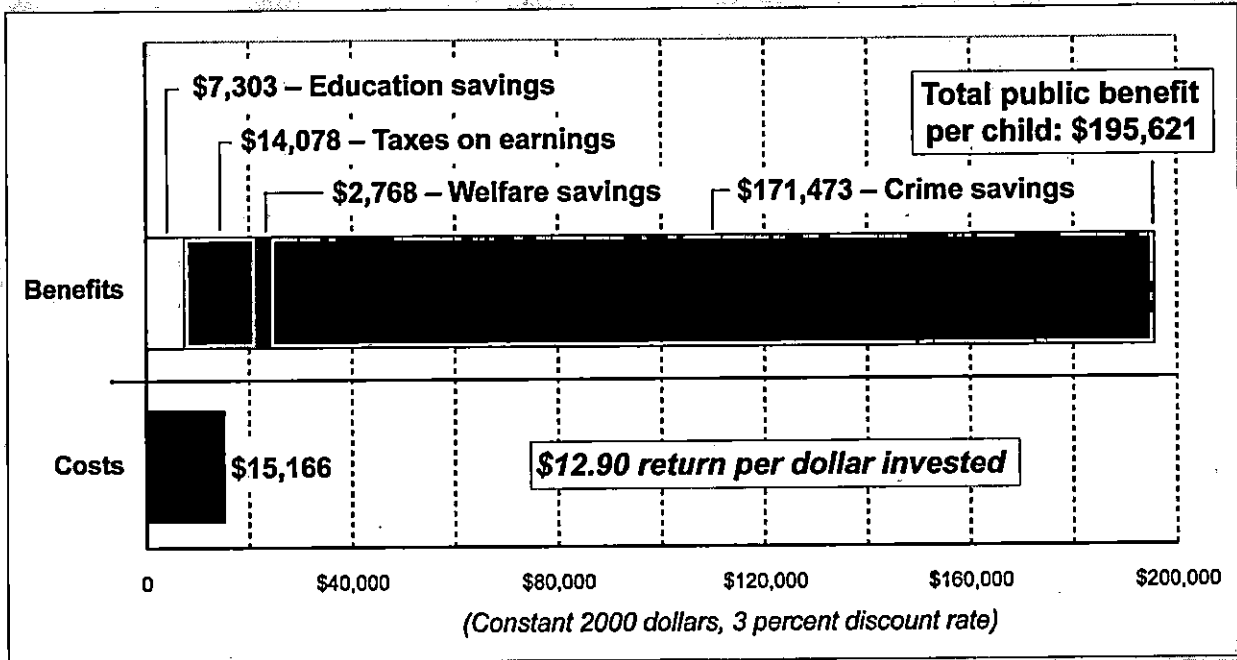
- Students “end up as net economic and social contributors to society.”
- Local and state budgets are significantly stronger so “governments can dedicate more of their resources to productive endeavors, rather than to remediation, incarceration and welfare.”
- Programs “ensure a better-educated workforce, boosting long-term economic growth.”

**James Heckman**, 2000 Nobel Laureate in Economics, said, “The later in life we attempt to repair early deficits, the costlier the remediation becomes.”<sup>48</sup>



# CPP: Effective, worthy of expansion

Figure 2 – High/Scope Perry Preschool Program Public Costs and Benefits



Source: Schweinhart, Lawrence, et al., "The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40," High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2005.

## Recommendations

Steve Barnett, one of the authors of the NIEER report and an expert witness for the Lobato v. State of Colorado lawsuit on the adequacy of school funding, said that it is entirely possible to close 40 to 50 percent of the achievement gaps for disadvantaged children in Colorado by serving more children in CPP and improving the quality of the program by investing more resources in it.<sup>49</sup> He said that to improve on the quality standards to meet all the benchmarks outlined by NIEER, funding would need to be increased by \$1,148 per pupil.<sup>50</sup> The increased funding for CPP since 2012 has covered about \$175 of this amount.<sup>51</sup>

### Recommendation 1: Expand participation in CPP by funding more slots

More slots need to be available to provide access to all students eligible for CPP. Estimates indicate that only about six out of 10 eligible 4-year-olds in Colorado are currently being served by CPP. In addition, CDE estimates that only about 6 percent of all eligible 3-year-olds are being served by CPP.<sup>52</sup> It is hard to calculate the exact percentage of the CPP-eligible 3-year-olds not being served because they must meet at least three different risk factors to be eligible.<sup>53</sup> Overall, about two-thirds of all students who are estimated to be eligible for CPP are being served.

But expanding CPP slots requires commitment and investment. In 2013 and 2014, the school finance bills provided funding for additional slots for CPP in ECARE. The average funding per-





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pupil for each CPP slot was \$3,335 in 2013<sup>54</sup> and \$3,510 in 2014.<sup>55</sup> The cost to expand CPP to serve the estimated 11,023 students in the state who are eligible for CPP but not being served would total about \$38.6 million, using school-year 2014-15 funding of \$3,510 per slot. This is less than the \$41 million estimated by the Legislative Council Staff in 2012.<sup>56</sup> In the past, the legislature has phased in additional slots, thus spreading the full costs over several fiscal years. However, doing this deprives thousands of at-risk students from receiving the benefits of this valuable preschool instruction.

This investment would not only improve the lives of the children who can be served by CPP but also save the state money over the long run. Longitudinal studies of programs similar to CPP show they have a return on investment of nearly \$13 for every \$1 invested. An analysis of the effects of CPP in helping at-risk students avoid placement in special education shows that it saved \$22.8 million in this area alone over a five-year period.

### **Recommendation 2: Make CPP full day**

More educational time for students would increase the benefits of CPP. Research shows that increased time in the classroom yields better results, particularly for disadvantaged children, which CPP serves, because it provides greater opportunity for teachers to work individually with students. In addition, it allows for a more relaxing atmosphere with less time proportionately spent on routines such as meals, tying shoelaces and hand washing.<sup>57</sup> Another benefit of a full-day program would be that it would provide meals for children that they might not have otherwise, which would also improve CPP's quality rating.<sup>58</sup> Although there is currently a cap of 5 percent on the use of slots for full-day preschool in the first 20,160 CPP slots, ECARE provides more access to full-day preschool. On the other hand, only about 9 percent of the ECARE slots in 2013 and 5 percent in 2014 were used for full-day preschool; the rest were used for half-day pre-school and full-day kindergarten.<sup>59</sup>

To provide full-day preschool for all of the students who are currently in half-day programs would cost about \$66 million, based on the number of half-day slots in school year 2014-15 at \$3,510 per CPP slot.

This investment, while substantial, would pay dividends over the long run in better-prepared students, lower costs for social programs, reduced criminal justice expenses and more qualified workers. Again, the legislature could phase in this expansion and spread the costs over several fiscal years.

### **Recommendation 3: Prioritize funding for CPP expansion over full-day kindergarten**

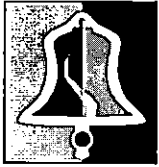
Research shows that a combination of preschool and half-day kindergarten is better than full-day kindergarten alone.<sup>61</sup> Students who attend preschool and half-day kindergarten are more likely to have higher reading skills by the third grade than students who attend full-day kindergarten alone. The impact of preschool and half-day kindergarten was the greatest for Hispanic children, black children, English Language Learners (ELL) and children from low-income families. The proven effectiveness of high-quality preschool – and CPP in particular – demonstrates that Colorado's limited resources for education funding would be better spent on increasing the number of slots in CPP rather than expanding full-day kindergarten.

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## End notes:

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42. Horton, Carol, [“Protective Factors Literature Review: Early Care and Education Programs and the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect,”](#) Center for the Study of Social Policy, September 2003.

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**Date:** Jan. 26, 2015

**Prime Sponsor:** Rep. Brittany Pettersen

**Bill Status:** House Education Committee

**Sens. John Kefalas, Nancy Todd** **Policy Analyst:** Frank Waterous (303) 297-0456

## Increasing number of Colorado Preschool Program students

This bill represents an important opportunity gain for Colorado, and the Bell Policy Center strongly supports it. High-quality preschool puts children on a path to success. It provides a positive start to school and is the first step on a journey that prepares students to reach their full potential, enriching their lives and strengthening our state's workforce and economy.<sup>1</sup>

### Summary of legislation

House Bill 15-1024 was recommended by the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission. Beginning in fiscal year 2015-16, it provides \$11.3 million in state General Fund appropriations to fund 3,000 additional preschool slots for eligible children in the Colorado Preschool Program. Based on this investment, the total slots available in the program would increase from 28,360 to 31,360.

### Background

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) provides quality early childhood education for children most likely to start school unprepared. It serves more than 20,000 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds who face risk factors such as poverty, homelessness, need for language development, poor social skills and having a parent without a high school diploma.

Participation in CPP is voluntary by school district, and 174 of 178 districts, as well as the Charter School Institute, are participating in the program in 2014-15.<sup>2</sup> The program funds placements – referred to as “slots” – rather than children, because districts may choose to use single slots for half-day preschool or double slots for full-day preschool.

The Bell Policy Center believes a top priority of the General Assembly should be to expand opportunities for Coloradans to achieve the American Dream. In that spirit, we offer Opportunity Notes on selected bills. Similar to Fiscal Notes, Opportunity Notes reflect our best analysis of whether a bill, if implemented, will expand opportunities for Coloradans.

Funding for CPP has not kept pace with the need. Based on demographic and educational data, the Colorado Department of Education estimates that CPP is funded to serve only about six out of 10 eligible 4-year-olds.<sup>3</sup> Although the state has made strides to close this gap, in school year 2014-15, CPP is serving only 15,869 out of 27,072 of 4-year-olds estimated to be eligible.<sup>4</sup>

### Research evidence of effectiveness

Decades of research shows that preschool and programs like CPP are effective at improving school readiness and closing achievement gaps for at-risk students. The positive aspects of preschool extend to future generations, as students go on to raise their families in better circumstances, helping to break the cycle of poverty.

Research shows that a combination of preschool and half-day kindergarten is better than full-day kindergarten alone.<sup>5</sup> Students who attend preschool and half-day kindergarten are more likely to have higher reading skills by the third grade than students who attend full-day kindergarten alone. The impact of preschool and half-day kindergarten was the greatest for Hispanic children, black children, English Language Learners (ELL) and children from low-income families.

Using a variety of measures, CPP has proven to be a very successful program:

- **School readiness.** The Results Matter assessments have demonstrated that CPP improves school readiness and closes the achievement gap for at-risk students. Compared with their tuition-paying, non-CPP peers, CPP

A POSITIVE analysis means our research suggests a bill will expand opportunity in a cost effective manner.

A NEGATIVE analysis means our research suggests the measure will restrict opportunities or will not cost-effectively achieve its goals.

students either catch up fully or exceed these peers by the end of the preschool year.<sup>6</sup>

- **Colorado K-12 assessments.** Assessments given to all K-12 students in Colorado show that the academic advantages of CPP extend much further than kindergarten readiness and do not “fade out” (that is, diminish). **Literacy outcomes in grades 1 through 3 confirm the positive impact of CPP.** Various early literacy assessments show that about 60 percent of children who are in CPP for one year and about 70 percent of children who are in CPP for two years are at or above grade level.<sup>7</sup> Longitudinal results of CPP students in grades 3 through 7 on CSAP/TCAP show that they score consistently 10 to 15 percent higher than non-CPP at-risk students.<sup>8</sup> CPP students in Denver Public Schools, when they took the ACT exam, scored at the same level or above the rest of the district’s students.<sup>9</sup>

- **Other state indicators of success.** Another aspect of CPP’s success is that the rate of its students held back at any point in early grade school is cut by as much as half.<sup>10</sup> Also, a study estimated that due to CPP, 1,300 at-risk children over a five-year period were able to avoid placement in special-education programs; overall, this saved Colorado school districts \$22.8 million.<sup>11</sup> Further, research indicates that the positive outcomes for CPP participants will continue as they go on to raise their own families in better circumstances, breaking the cycle of poverty and its accompanying disadvantages.

### Estimates of impact

**There is strong evidence that economically disadvantaged children reap long-term benefits from preschool.**<sup>12</sup> Longitudinal studies on the benefits of preschool education have all shown that the benefits far outweigh the cost.<sup>13</sup> In 2000, a cost-benefit analysis of the High Scope/Perry Preschool Project indicated a savings to the public of about seven times the initial investment per child – savings that resulted from higher earnings, increased tax revenue and savings to the criminal justice system, crime victims and in public assistance.<sup>14</sup> After a 40-year follow-up with participants, **the cost-benefit results showed a \$12.90 return per \$1 invested.**<sup>15</sup>

**Investing in preschool produces a much higher return when compared with other public investments.**<sup>16</sup> The Committee for Economic Development (CED), an independent research and policy organization of business leaders and educators that proposes policies for steady economic growth, says that “**preschool is**

**far more cost effective than programs that correct educational and social problems in later years.**”<sup>17</sup> CED says that high-quality preschool programs are a wise investment because they “contribute to America’s economic bottom line” in several ways:<sup>18</sup>

- Students “end up as net economic and social contributors to society.”

- Local and state budgets are significantly stronger so “governments can dedicate more of their resources to productive endeavors, rather than to remediation, incarceration and welfare.”

- Programs “ensure a better-educated workforce, boosting long-term economic growth.”

Expanding the Colorado Preschool Program will ensure that more children are given the strong foundation required for school and life success, and will provide significant long-term benefits to our state. **The Bell Policy Center strongly supports HB 15-1024 as a key bill increasing opportunity in Colorado.**

### End notes

<sup>1</sup> See the Bell Policy Center’s detailed policy brief, *Colorado Preschool Program is effective and should be expanded to serve more children*, Jan 15, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *Colorado Preschool Program 2014 Fact Sheet*, CDE’s webpage.

<sup>3</sup> Colorado Department of Education (CDE), *Colorado Preschool Program Legislative Report 2013*.

<sup>4</sup> *Colorado Preschool Program* on CDE’s website.

<sup>5</sup> Hull, Jim, *Starting Out Right: Pre-K and Kindergarten*, Center for Public Education, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> CDE, *Colorado Preschool Program Legislative Report 2012*.

<sup>7 & 8</sup> CDE, *Colorado Preschool Program Legislative Report 2013*.

<sup>9 & 10</sup> CDE, *Colorado Preschool Program Legislative Report 2011*.

<sup>11</sup> Light, Miles K., *The Economic Impact of Child Care in Colorado*, Colorado Children’s Campaign, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Barnett, W. Steven, *Preschool Education and Its Lasting Effects: Research and Policy Implications*, NIEER at Rutgers University, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> For more examples, see the Bell’s *Colorado Preschool Program is effective and should be expanded to serve more children*.

<sup>14</sup> Parks, Greg, *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project*, Juvenile Justice Bulletin, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, October 2000. In this study, public assistance refers to welfare assistance prior to welfare reform.

<sup>15</sup> Schweinhart, Lawrence, et al., *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40*, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Light, 2005.

<sup>17 & 18</sup> Committee for Economic Development, *The Economic Promise of Investing in High-Quality Preschool: Using Early Education to Improve Economic Growth and the Fiscal Sustainability of States and the Nation*, 2006.