



Colorado Preschool Program Legislative Report 2019

Submitted to:
Colorado General Assembly



By:
Colorado Department of Education

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Colorado Preschool Program Shows Long-Term Positive Outcomes for Children



The 2018-19 school year marks the 30th anniversary of the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). Over the past three decades, CPP has served 378,658 children and has shown to support long-lasting positive outcomes. This year's legislative report provides new longitudinal results showing reductions in

students identified with significant reading deficiencies (SRD) in grades K – 3, lower rates of students being held back, and increased chances for on-time high school graduation.

In 1988, the Colorado General Assembly made an ongoing financial commitment to building a strong foundation for students by creating the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). While high-quality preschool requires a significant investment, it is often less costly than holding students back a grade level and other later interventions. Children in CPP make significant gains in learning and development over the course of a school year, lowering the likelihood of retention in later grades. In fact, kindergarteners who participated in CPP were less likely to be identified with a SRD. Furthermore, students who participated in CPP as preschoolers were more likely to graduate on time than students with similar risk factors who did not participate in CPP.

The vision of the Colorado Department of Education is for all students to graduate high school ready for college and careers and prepared to be productive citizens of our state. The strong foundation provided by high quality early learning experiences enables students to succeed throughout their school years. That is why high quality early learning is one of our most important initiatives.

In this year's report, you can read about the positive impact the Colorado Preschool Program has had on our youngest students throughout the state during the 2017-18 school year. These stories strengthen our understanding of evidence-based approaches to helping children become lifelong learners who are fully ready to succeed in school. Together with families, schools, and community partners, CPP is part of broad system that encompasses a rich landscape of early



learning for Colorado's children. These partnerships are necessary for continued success with initiatives that build a strong foundation for children in Colorado. We want to thank our partners for helping us shape the fabric of early learning in our state.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katy Anthes".

Katy Anthes, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education

The Colorado Preschool Program at 30 Years

Now in its 30th year, the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) provides annual funding for up to 29,360 positions for preschool education, serving 378,658 children since its inception.

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) is a state funded preschool program administered by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Enacted by the Colorado General Assembly in 1988, CPP currently provides funding for up to 29,360 young children who have certain risk factors associated with later challenges in school. Since 2013, the General Assembly has expanded CPP three times through the Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) program, which provides flexibility to use 9,200 CPP positions for either half- or full-day preschool or full-day kindergarten. Children who are eligible for CPP attend high-quality early childhood programs. These may be located in school district settings, local child care centers, community preschools or Head Start programs.



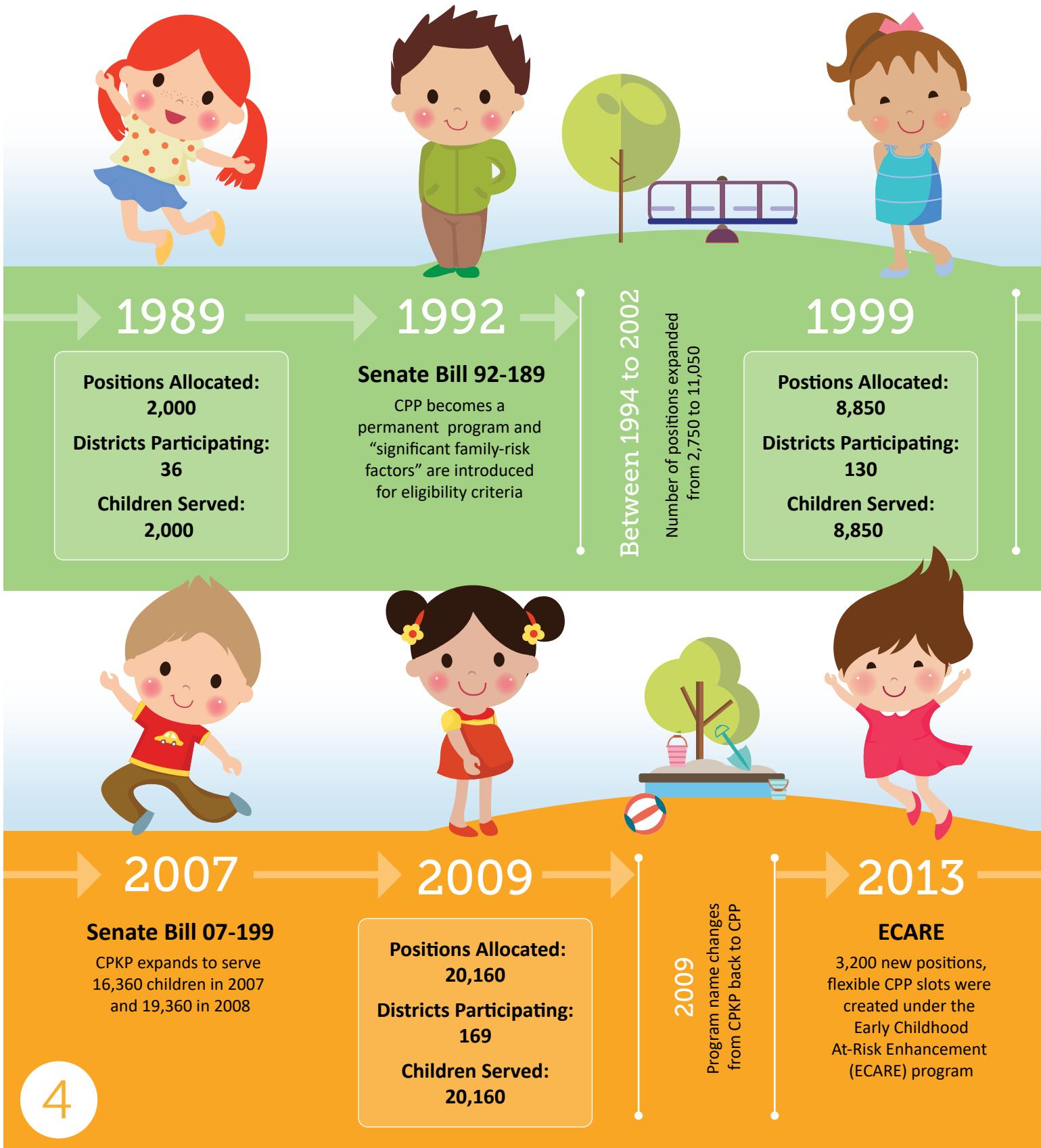
A Brief History of the Program

The Colorado General Assembly created CPP in 1988 to provide an opportunity for children to attend high quality preschools if they have certain risk factors in their lives that are associated with later challenges in school.

When it was created in 1988, CPP provided funding for 2,000 children in 36 districts. Between 1994 and 2002, the program expanded from 2,750 to 11,050 positions with further expansions occurring in the 2000s to create funding for 20,160 positions. In 2013, the General Assembly further expanded CPP with 3,200 positions through the Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) program. These positions allow districts the flexibility to serve CPP-eligible children in either half- or full-day preschool or full-day kindergarten. In 2014 and 2018, an additional 5,000 and 1,000 slots, respectively, were added to the ECARE program. By the end of the 2017-18 school year, CPP provided funding for up to 29,360 positions.

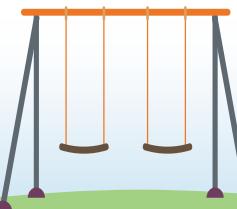


Colorado Preschool Program Timeline



1988

Colorado General Assembly
Authorizes CPP to be Created



2003

Senate Bill 03-24

Reduction of 2,000 positions in CPP for 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years

Results Matter

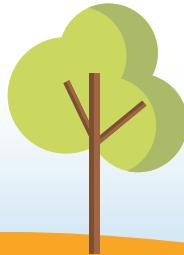
Colorado's Early Childhood Assessment and Outcomes Measurement System begins

2005

Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program Act (CPKP)

Name changes from Colorado Preschool Program Act to Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program Act

2006



2014

5,000 additional ECARE positions approved in 2014

2016

Reinterpretation of C.R.S. 22-28-106(a)(1)(IV)

Statute reinterpreted to allow eligible children on an IEP to access a full Per-Pupil Revenue of state funding

2018

Positions Allocated:
28,360*

Districts Participating:
175

Children Served:
26,650

* The General Assembly added 1,000 more positions to the ECARE program in the 2018 legislative session to be utilized in 2018-19 school year.

Children Served by the Colorado Preschool Program

ELIGIBILITY

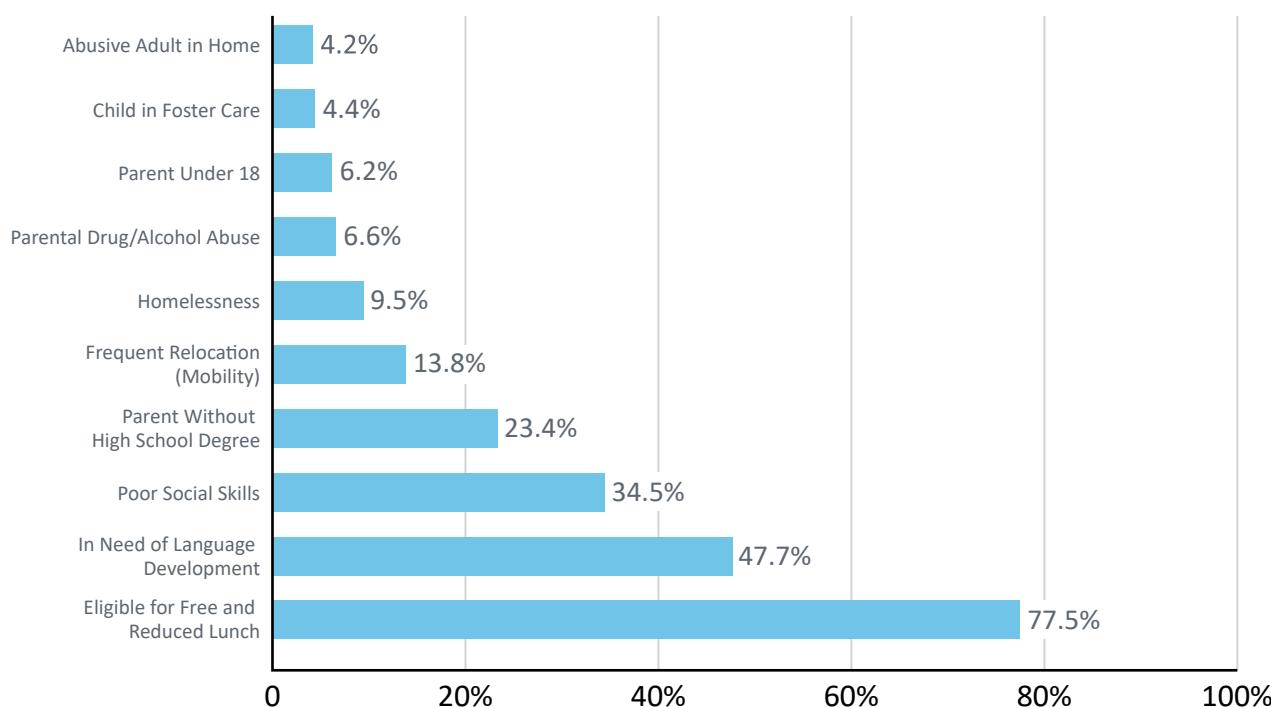
Children between the ages of three and five who have significant family risk factors are eligible for funding under CPP. Three-year-olds must have at least three significant risk factors whereas children who are four or five years old must have at least one risk factor and be age-eligible for kindergarten the following year.

School districts may include additional family risk factors in their community to qualify for CPP as determined by their district advisory council. For the 2017-18 school year, 38 districts reported using additional risk factors such as parental military deployment.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of children funded by CPP in 2017-18 with each of the state-specified significant family risk factors. Because children may qualify with more than one risk factor, the percentages add up to more than 100 percent.

Figure 2: Eligibility Risk Factors for CPP

Each line represents the percentage of children funded by CPP with that risk factor



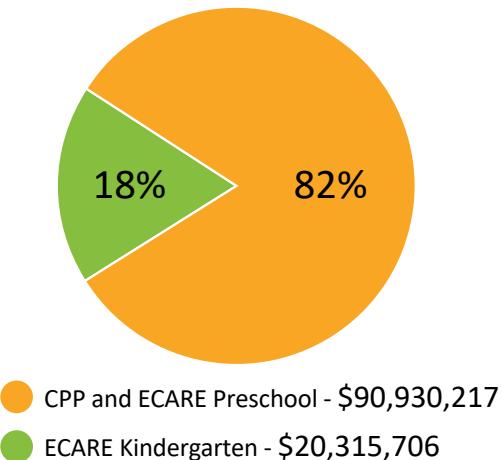


CPP by the Numbers

The General Assembly allocated **\$111,245,923** to CPP for the 2017-18 school year. The average annual state preschool spending **per child in Colorado was \$4,095**. A total of **26,650¹ children** were served by CPP in 2017-18.

Of the total funding for CPP, 18.3 percent was used for full-day kindergarten under the ECARE kindergarten program with the remaining 81.7 percent used for preschool.

**Figure 3: Total CPP Funding
\$111,245,923²**

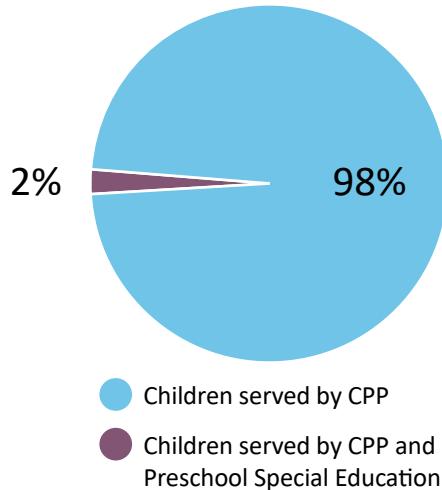


Expanding CPP to Children with Educational Disabilities

As described in state statute, the intent of CPP is to provide services for children with the highest need, so districts are encouraged to enroll children with the greatest number of family risk factors. For some children, this risk also includes having an identified educational disability.³ In 2016, CDE clarified its interpretation of statutes and rules relating to the use of CPP funds for students with disabilities. As a result, programs may include children who qualify for special education services when they also meet the eligibility criteria of CPP. This allows districts to fund full-day preschool for children who qualify for CPP and special education by combining funding from both CPP and special education formula funds.

In 2017-18, 619 children attended preschool with combined funding from CPP and preschool special education as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Program Enrollment by Numbers



¹ Please note that two half-day CPP positions may be used to fund a full-day of preschool for some children.

² This is in comparison to a total of \$6.63 billion in K-12 funding in Colorado

³ C.R.S. § 22-28-106(a)(1)(IV) and CPP Rule 5.08

Figure 5: Enrollment of Children in CPP by Gender

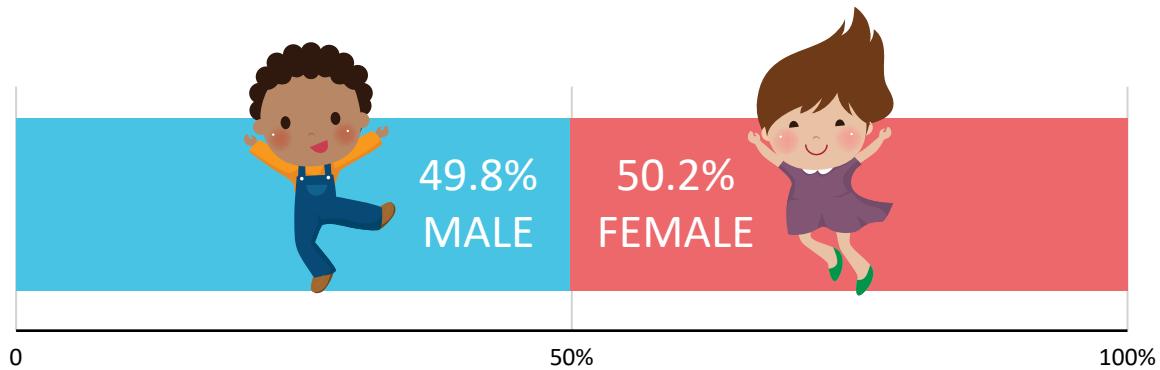
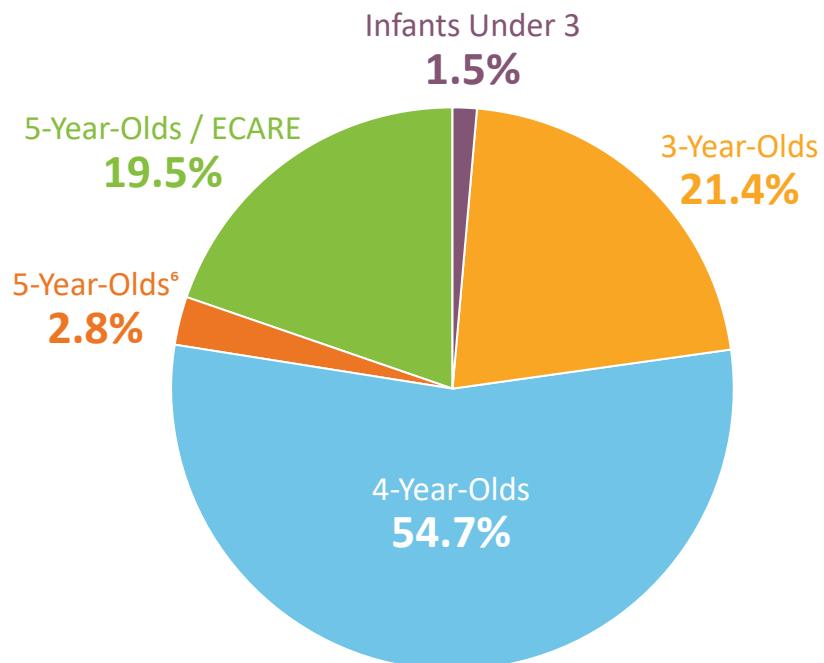


Figure 6: Enrollment of Children in CPP by Age^{4,5}



⁴ Some districts are able to serve younger children through a waiver granted at the initiation of the Colorado Preschool Program. This option is no longer statutorily available.

⁵ Eligible three-year-olds must reach the age of three on or before the school district's kindergarten age cutoff date which can be no later than October 1. Eligible four-year-olds must be age-eligible for kindergarten the following year and reach four on or before October 1. Eligible five-year-olds must be age-eligible for kindergarten the following year.

⁶ Five-year-olds participating in CPP as a preschooler rather than in ECARE in kindergarten.

Figure 7: Enrollment of Children in CPP by Ethnicity

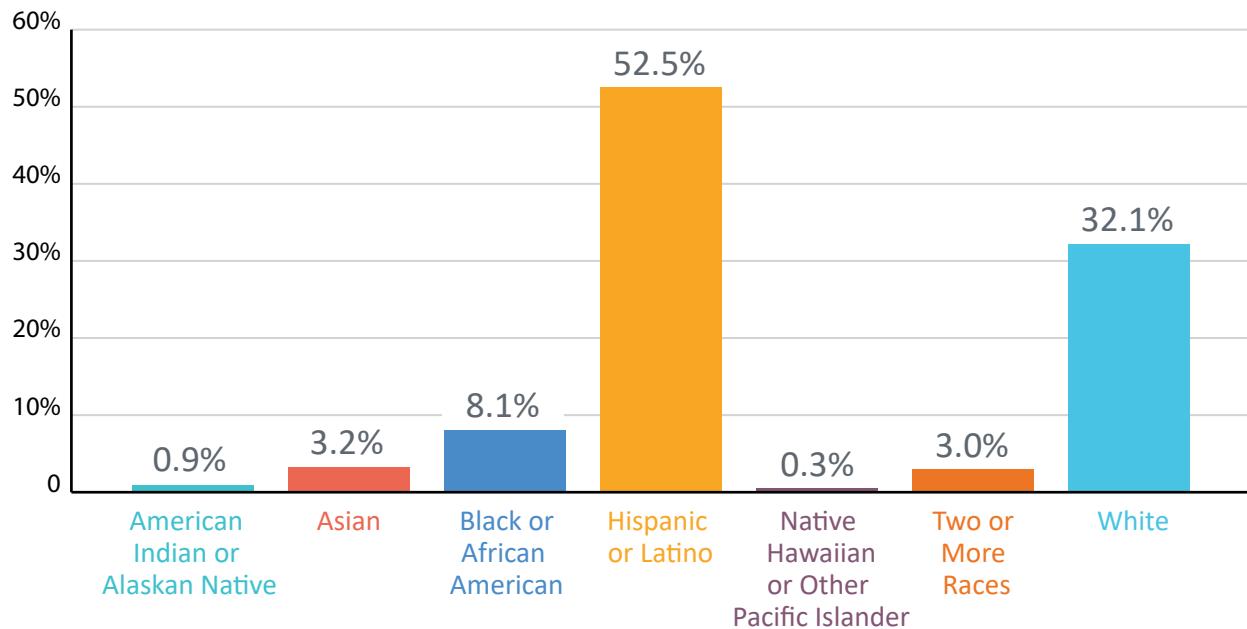


Figure 8: Enrollment by Length of Day

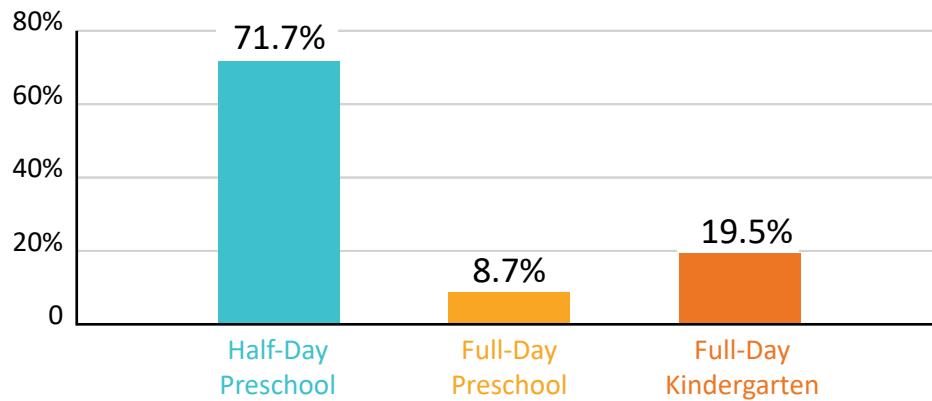
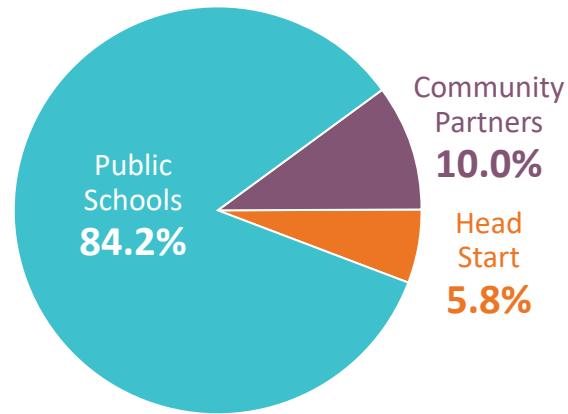


Figure 9: Enrollment of Children in CPP by Setting





Estimating Unmet Demand

CDE is unable to track unmet demand for CPP funded positions because enrollment in preschool is managed by school districts. However, some districts keep a waiting list, and those who do reported having a total of 4,150 children on waiting lists. To better understand unmet demand in the 2017-18 school year, CDE used data from the State Demography Office and state pupil counts of potentially at-risk children to estimate that as many as 8,202 four-year-olds had no preschool available to them either through CPP or Head Start.



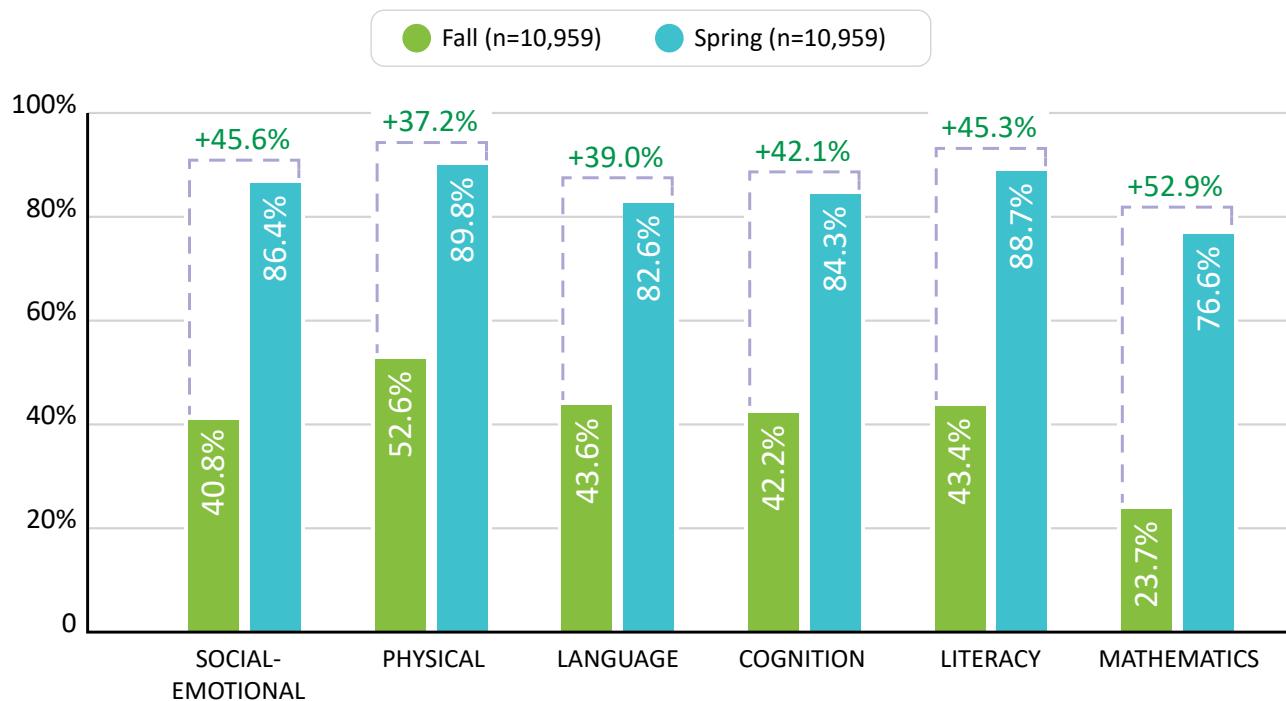
CPP Outcomes: A Success Story

2017-18 School Year Outcomes

All programs funded through CPP use authentic observational child assessment through the *Results Matter* program to support the learning and growth of children. *Results Matters* offers educators a useful tool to measure progress, individualize instruction, and monitor growth for children. Using observations of children in their everyday learning environments, educators assess children's progress in key areas of learning and development in the course of everyday routines and activities. Through a combination of children's work samples and assessment scores, teachers are able to paint a unique, detailed view of each child that supports individualized instruction from educators and meaningful information for families.

While the primary purpose of the *Results Matter* assessment is to inform teacher practice, programs can also get an overall picture of how children are performing related to widely held expectations of child development throughout the school year in each of six areas: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and mathematics. Results displayed in Figure 10 demonstrate the growth children enrolled in CPP made across each domain from the fall to the spring. In each area, children made significant overall gains in learning and development over the course of the school year.

Figure 10: Percentage of CPP Four-Year-Olds Meeting or Exceeding Widely Held Expectations in 2017-18



Long-term Outcomes for Students Served by the Colorado Preschool Program

Longitudinal data for students who participated in CPP show positive long-term outcomes related to identification of significant reading deficiencies, grade retention, and on-time graduation rates.

1

Kindergarteners who participated in CPP for half- and full-day preschool were less likely to be identified with a significant reading deficiency than their peers who did not participate.

Analysis reveals that students who participated in CPP funded programs were about seven percent less likely to be identified with an SRD in kindergarten when compared with students who were equally at risk but did not participate in CPP.

2

Children funded through CPP are less likely to be retained during the K – 3 experience than their like peers.

Years of data analysis of CPP participants demonstrate that when compared to similar groups of at-risk children who did not attend publicly funded preschool, CPP is associated with a reduced need for retention (i.e., holding children back in a grade) by about half in K-3 overall and as low as two-thirds the rate in first grade. This translates to lower costs for children repeating a grade.

3

Children funded through CPP have better on-time graduation outcomes than their peers.

For the first time, CDE can measure graduation rates for the earliest cohort of CPP-funded children for which data are available. An analysis of graduation within four years of entering ninth grade found that children who participated in half- or full-day CPP in the 2003-04 school year were more likely to graduate with a high school diploma within four years when compared to children who did not participate in CPP who were equally at risk.⁷

⁷ Denotes a statistically significant association. For a more detailed discussion with standard statistical reporting, please [contact CDE](#). Language proficiency, race, ethnicity, special education status, gender, and free or reduced price lunch status taken at twelfth grade. "High school diploma" does not include a GED.

The Vital Role of Family Engagement

An important goal of CPP is to involve families in the preschool educational experience. CPP strives to make families equal partners with schools, encouraging families and schools to work together to improve children's social and academic outcomes. CPP funded programs are guided by the CPP Handbook which provides information and expectations for active family engagement in the preschool learning experiences of their children.

Throughout the program's 30-year history, CPP has made a strong effort to foster partnerships between schools and families that result in positive outcomes for students.



...The Otis Elementary Preschool

Program is assisting me and

my children in developing the curious,
active minds and skills needed to prepare
for their success in school. It gives my
children the opportunity to learn social
skills and interact with children of their
same age group. The Otis Elementary
Preschool gives quality instruction and
interest in helping these children achieve.

I believe that this program is an invaluable
asset and resource for the children of our
community.

Otis Parent



“

The community liaison at Birch Elementary offered a Confident Parenting workshop in February 2018 in partnership with Broomfield Early Childhood Council (BECC). The workshop was free for families, paid for by a BECC grant from the county and the Pyramid Model. They offered child care with the support of nine National Honors Society student volunteers from Broomfield High, and the principal paid for a pizza dinner for adults and children participating. The workshop was advertised to all preschool - third grade families at school during the week of conferences. Overall, there was a good amount of participation - parents asking questions, sharing their situations, and giving each other ideas. That was one of the nice things about having it at a school where there is already a connection and a bit of community: participants were respectful of each other and seemed to connect and care about each other pretty quickly. People responded to the material well and got new ideas or were reminded of ideas they have been meaning to implement. Since the workshop, the preschool families who attended say that they learned the importance of giving their children individual attention, they are trying not to yell so much, they are trying to set logical consequences for actions, and that they are now using a visual schedule to support routines at home.

Boulder Valley RE-2

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CDE's Commitment to Early Learning from Preschool through Third Grade

The time period from birth through age eight is considered by developmental scientists to be a critical development period that sets the stage for children's educational and lifelong success.⁸ Positive early childhood outcomes are sustained when children are in a system that is coherent and aligned to support their developmental and academic needs. To help local early childhood programs and schools develop a strong, aligned system for young children, CDE has committed to create greater alignment of its efforts in preschool through third grade (P-3). We anticipate this integrated approach to build upon the success of the CPP program will continue to narrow the achievement gaps.

The department's Strategic Plan outlines Key Initiatives that map out the commitment to children at every step of their academic experience. The first initiative, Strong Foundations, focuses on support for our youngest students and their educators. Through this initiative, the department works to ensure more students are reading at grade level by the end of third grade to build a strong foundation for continued success in school through partnerships with families, community organizations, schools, and communities.



“

We hosted a “Magical Math” night this year to educate and inform families. All family members were invited and we had a great turnout. We served pizza and salad for dinner.

Students, parents, and siblings completed math activities together such as making shape pictures, estimating MGM graphing, bingo marker patterning, color sorting, and a measuring photo booth.

We gave away door prizes and each student received a wonderful counting book and a math activity book to take home. We also provided parents with creative ways to increase math awareness with their children.

North Conejos RE-1J

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School District #8 conducted a “Young Engineers Night” in January 2018. The event allowed families to attend with their children and engage in open-ended activities that required problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, and fine motor skills. These activities also encouraged discussion and the development of language. The learning target was identified for each activity, emphasizing what students were learning as they engaged in this play. Students, parents, and siblings joined us for pizza and STEM activities at both Weikel Early Intervention and Conrad Early Learning Center. It was fun to see families working together to build rafts, construct towers, solve problems, and of course, eat marshmallows!

Fountain 8

”

Conclusion

For 30 years, data demonstrate that CPP is a powerful tool for closing opportunity gaps for young children. However, this is not something CPP can do alone. CPP is only one part of an aligned early learning experience from preschool through third grade. For more information on how CDE partners with stakeholders across Colorado to ensure all children are valued, healthy, and thriving, please visit the [Early Childhood Leadership Commission](#) to learn more about the Early Childhood Colorado Framework.

Colorado Preschool Team

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