

Colorado Preschool Program

2006 Legislative Report





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Colorado Preschool Program

2006 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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The Colorado Department of Education dedicates itself to increasing achievement levels for all students through comprehensive programs of education reform involving three interlocking elements: 1) *High Standards* for what students must know and be able to do; 2) *Challenging Assessments* that honestly measure whether or not students meet standards and tell citizens the truth about how well our schools serve children; and 3) *Rigorous Accountability Measures* that tie the accreditation of school districts to high student achievement.

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Introduction

“One of the best gifts we can give our children is a good education. The preparation a child receives through a positive preschool experience makes success in school possible, especially when that child is living in an environment that puts them otherwise at-risk.”

*Town Marshal,
Palmer Lake*

Ensuring that children are ready for successful school experiences is the primary goal of the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). In 1988 the General Assembly established the Colorado Preschool Program to serve children whose life circumstances would cause them to start school behind their peers. Over the last eighteen years, CPP has been able to document that these early educational experiences do make a difference. School districts participating in CPP have found that preschool education and family support can promote academic achievement, lower rates of grade retention and special education placement and promote higher graduation rates. Strong early learning leads to better educated and more employable individuals, as well as less remediation throughout the education system, which benefits all of Colorado.

◆ Included in this report is a description of **Results Matter**, an initiative coordinated through the Colorado Department of Education to assure that our programs are of the highest possible quality and that we are doing the best that we can to support our young children’s learning, development and readiness for school.

The Results Matter initiative has developed an assessment and outcome measurement system that builds on the work being done by school districts across the state in measuring the effectiveness of CPP, and it will allow us to study the effectiveness of early intervention in a more systematic way.

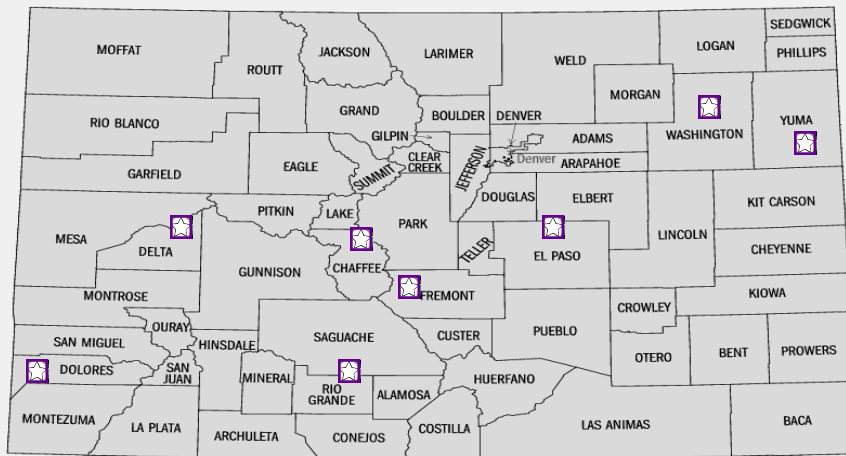
The Results Matter assessment and outcome measurement system is inclusive of all children and comprehensive in that it includes multiple measures, short and long term assessment, attention to both child and family outcomes, and measures of programmatic and systemic quality.

Results Matter will be useful to a wide range of stakeholders, including families, practitioners, programs, communities, state agencies and the Legislature. In particular we will be able to:

- ◆ Describe the progress that children make over time;
- ◆ Make data-driven program and policy decisions;
- ◆ Demonstrate the effectiveness of the programs; and
- ◆ Tailor day-to-day interactions and interventions provided by adults to each child’s needs.



2005 Colorado Preschool Program Expansion



With the 2005 expansion of CPP, eight new school districts were provided the opportunity to participate in the Colorado Preschool Program. These districts include:

Buena Vista School District in Chaffee County: “We know children who receive early access to services have a stronger chance for success in school, as well as experience more positive outcomes.”

Delta School District in Delta County: “Workers with limited education and employment skills fill the employment ranks in Delta. They are consumed with putting food on the table and providing the barest of necessities. There is little time for educational concerns or how well their children are doing in school—or very little knowledge of the negative effect their disconnected role will play in the educational future of their children in the primary grades. Without intervention at both ends of the educational spectrum, adult and early childhood, this vicious cycle of poverty and lack of opportunity will continue to accelerate.”

Dolores School District in Dolores County: “Our students are at risk of school failure due to high levels of poverty, isolation, generally low parent education levels, high mobility, and a student population with limited access to enriching activities.”

Ellicott School District in El Paso County: “Ellicott is a community where few early intervention and preschool service options are available. While a limited number of slots are available through the Head Start program, countless other families and children are left unserved. We need only reflect upon the low levels of readiness of many of our entering Kindergarten students to see the need for more preschool options for our community. We all share the belief that early involvement in a child’s social, emotional, physical, and educational development will pay great rewards in years to come.”

Cotopaxi School District in Fremont County: “Many students come to our school with significant delays. We believe a large part of this is due to the lack of preschool in our school district... Expectations for student achievement continues to rise, yet more and more students enter kindergarten without the skills necessary to begin their academic pursuits. The school is the heart of the community and we would be proud to have the preschool share that place with our K-12 school.”

Center School District in Saguache County: “CPP funding will ensure that students whose parents are unable to afford tuition will be able to attend preschool in this community.”

Lone Star School District in Washington County: “As preschool and early childhood programs are known to improve the future learning prospects for our children, it is to the benefit of us all to make preschool programs available to the children in our communities.”

In the 2005 Legislative session, CPP was expanded, and as a result was authorized to serve **12,360** children (10,860 preschool children and 1,500 full-day kindergarten children) in the 2005-06 school year.

In 1988 when it was first authorized, the Colorado Preschool Project provided preschool services for 2,000 of Colorado’s four and five year olds in need of language development.

Initially, thirty-two school districts across the state participated in the program.

Now **162 out of 178** (91%) of the school districts in Colorado participate in CPP. Participation on the part of school districts is voluntary.

Colorado Preschool Program Collaborations

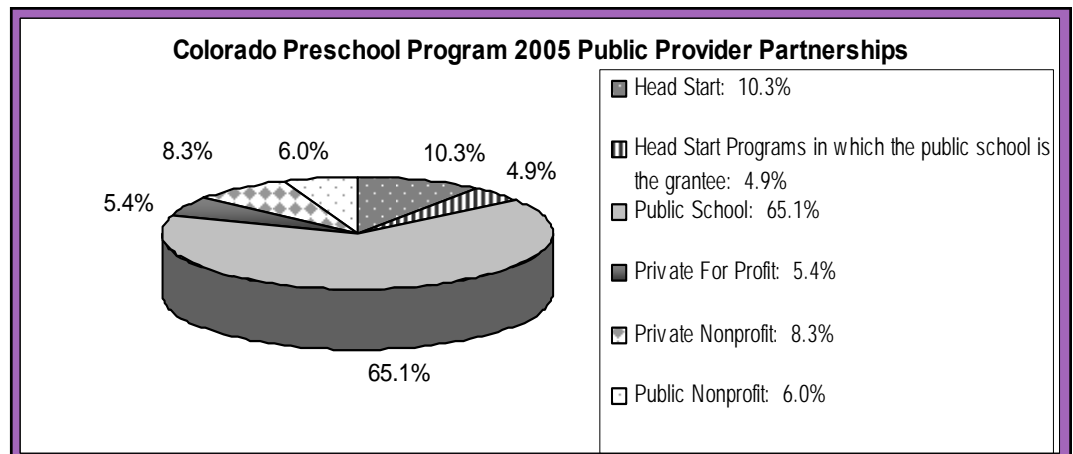
“Over the past 15 years, over 150 children at our preschool have benefited from CPP support. With this funding, we have been able to provide a high quality preschool program for children that might otherwise had never had the opportunity to attend preschool. We have enjoyed working with the Boulder Valley School District over these years and appreciate the State’s commitment to supporting programs for young children.”

**Director,
Community
Preschool in Boulder**

In FY 2004-05 more school districts contracted with community providers and the percentage of children that received CPP services through public schools decreased from FY 2003-04. The CPP legislation gives communities the freedom to decide locally who is best qualified to deliver CPP services. The intent of the law is to provide children and their families with the highest quality services available at the lowest cost. The additional benefit of this law is that the connection between community programs and school districts is strengthened.



Children funded in the Colorado Preschool Program are served throughout the state in Head Start programs, private for-profit programs, non-profit programs and programs within public schools. Whether a school district chooses to collaborate or not depends on the resources available within the community. A major responsibility of the local CPP district council is to develop a process that allows community early childhood programs to apply for the opportunity to deliver CPP services. One step in this process is to develop and issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to the community. The district preschool program councils are required to send out RFP’s at least once every five years to assess whether alternative community providers are available.



Who are the Children Served in the Colorado Preschool Program?



CPP focuses on children whose linguistic, family and/or economic disadvantages put them at risk for academic failure. Conditions that can indicate whether a child is at risk include low family income, violence or neglect in the home, low parent education levels, parent chemical addiction, and delays in development. Eligibility for children to participate in the program is determined by criteria that have been established by the state legislature and local district councils.

In the 2004-05 school year, school districts indicated that children served in CPP had an average of 3.5 risk factors present in their lives.

Statutorily Defined Risk Factors Used to Establish Eligibility for the Colorado Preschool Program	Percentage of Children Qualifying Under this Risk Factor
Child is eligible to receive free or reduced-cost meals	70%
In need of language development including learning English as a second language	31%
Child has been identified with poor social skills	27%
Child's parent has not successfully completed high school	25%
Either parent was less than 18 and unmarried at the time of the child's birth	16%
Frequent relocation of the child's family	14%
Receiving services from CDHS as neglected or dependent children	8%
Drug or alcohol abuse present in the family	8%
Child's family is homeless	6%
An abusive adult resides in the home of the child	5%

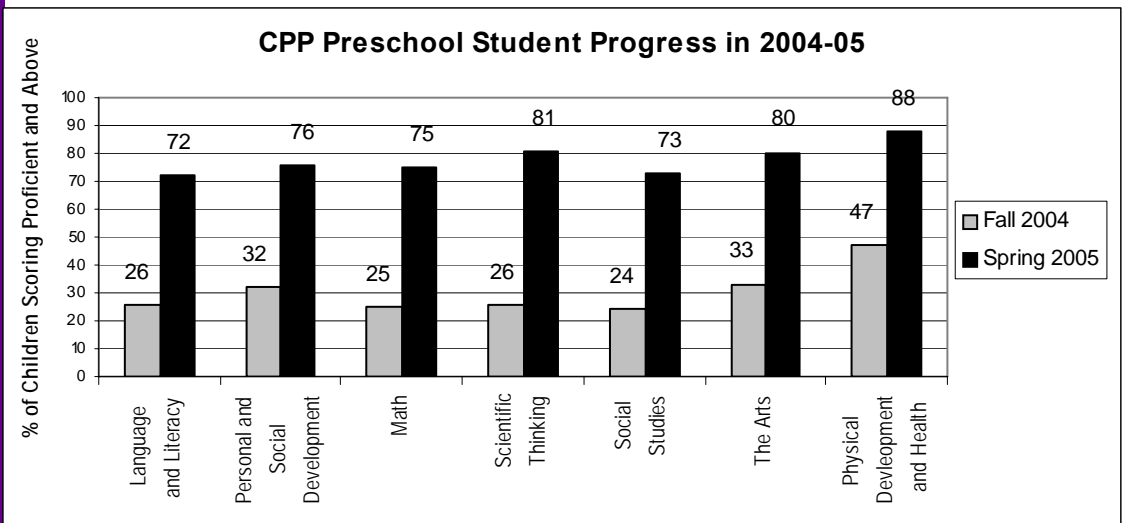
- ◆ With 10,360 preschool slots, the Colorado Preschool Program has the capacity to serve 15.3% of Colorado's four-year-old population. (Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Colorado Demography Office)
- ◆ In the 2005 school year, school districts participating in CPP identified an additional 5,715 children who were CPP eligible, but because of a lack of CPP slots, school districts were unable to serve these children .

Early childhood is a critical developmental period

and the Colorado Preschool Program provides an important opportunity to positively influence the development of children in the early years. Programs are reporting that if young children are provided a stimulating environment, support in language and cognitive development, consistent personal relationships, support for their families, and opportunities to interact with peers, those children can enter elementary school better prepared to learn. Below is an example of the growth documented for four-year-old CPP students in Colorado Springs School District #11, as measured by the Work Sampling System.

In Weld County School District RE-8 after 8 months in preschool, 35% of CPP students demonstrated 2 or more years growth in language skills, while 34% of children demonstrated more than a year's growth.

In Moffat County School District, 95% of CPP participants are meeting or exceeding the goals that were established by preschool teachers and parents in the fall.



“Children who come to school not knowing how to hold a crayon or a pair of scissors are now printing their own names, drawing recognizable people, and cutting around figures on the line. Many have learned to count to 20 with one-to-one correspondence and can identify the numerals 1-10. Those who were too shy to speak to anyone in the program are now willing to volunteer comments and other information and have made at least one special friend. The children can sit quietly and listen to a story or follow directions. They can toilet independently. They put away materials when they are finished with a project. In short, they are ready to be successful in kindergarten.”

Custer County School District



◆ In order to measure the progress children make during the preschool year, **Results Matter** is supporting programs in the use of one of three assessment tools (including Work Sampling which is reported above). With each program across the state using one of these three assessments, data on CPP will be reported in a more consistent manner. The other two choices of assessments will be the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum or the High/Scope Child Observation Record. These assessments are based on observation of children engaged in real activities, at multiple points of time, in natural settings, using information from the people who know them the best.

CPP Narrows the “Readiness Gap”



Without this opportunity many at-risk children are behind when they start school and continue to face barriers to achievement that can last through high school. Communities across the state are reporting that CPP can help narrow the gap between disadvantaged and less disadvantaged students before it starts to widen.

◆ Results Matter plans to survey kindergarten teachers statewide to determine children’s readiness for school.

Cripple Creek – Victor RE-1: This year was the first year the DIBELS was administered to kindergarten children in January and the results for the children attending the preschool program vs. those that didn’t were dramatic.

	Attended Preschool	Didn’t Attend Preschool
Were rated as having “Initial Sound Fluency” skills established	62%	11%
Were rated as “Phoneme Segmentation Skills” being low risk	77%	44%
Were rated as being on grade level	77%	44%

Limon RE 4-J: Kindergarten teachers scored 69% of CPP children at or above grade level on the Adams 50 Reading Assessment and 59% of children not participating in CPP scored in the same way.

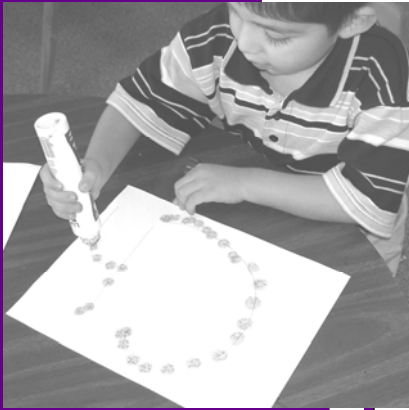
“To meet the needs of some of these children, CPP has proven to be invaluable. Most of the children in our CPP program would not receive a preschool experience without the free tuition ... As these at-risk children have experienced success beginning in preschool, so have their parents. Success has bred more success for these children and their families.”
Weld School District RE5-J District Council

Kindergarten Teachers in Adams County School District #14: “The differences (identified below) between a student entering kindergarten with preschool experience and a student with no preschool experience is huge, especially in the academic area.”

<i>Students with preschool experience</i>	<i>Students with no preschool experience</i>
Adapt better to routines and the learning environment	Take a longer time to adjust to routines and the learning environment
Have social and friendship skills	Need to develop social skills and understanding of rules
Have basic prereadiness skills—shapes, colors, letter and number awareness	Need to learn basic skills before they can master kindergarten objectives which puts them at a disadvantage
Are at grade level throughout the year with steady growth	Are usually below grade level through the year and a majority are considered for retention or an ILP (Individual Learning Plan)

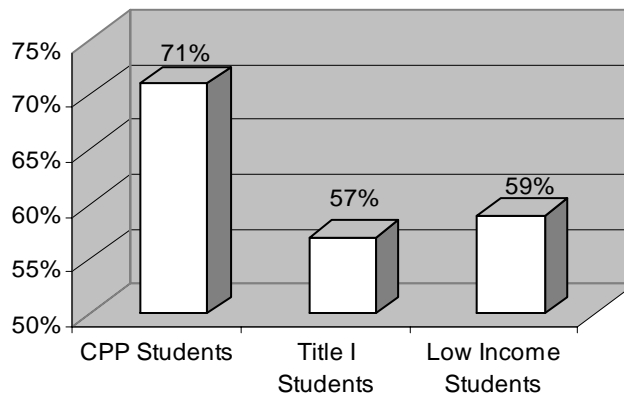
The Benefits of the Colorado Preschool Program are Long Term

School districts report that high quality preschool experiences and support for families yields success in later schooling, and better lifelong outcomes for children. The result is a more efficient education system with less pressure on school resources and expenditures. This is best demonstrated by CPP children's performance on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP).



“Closing the gap in school readiness for at-risk children is a particular challenge in Boulder, where the gap is made more dramatic by the numbers of children who come to our schools from highly educated families, compared to those children from families with limited income and education. Closing that gap is the goal of our Colorado Preschool Program.”
 Boulder Valley School District

Comparison of Students Scoring Proficient or Above on the 2004 Third Grade Reading CSAP



This graph compares the performance of CPP children on the 2004 Third Grade Reading CSAP, to those children who are in Title I programs, and those children who are eligible for free and reduced cost meals.

Denver: Although these students were identified as being at-risk of academic failure when they participated in ECE, the percentage of former CPP students scoring proficient and Advanced is greater than the district's percentage for this category.

Pueblo #60: Children who attended a District 60 preschool have demonstrated a higher level of proficiency than students who did not attend preschool for the last four years.

Garfield RE-2: CPP students have outperformed their peers in both the CSAP Reading and Writing Assessments for the last two years.

Weld County RE-1: 81% of former CPP students scored proficient and advanced on the third grade CSAP, compared to 67% of the non-CPP students.

Adams County District #50: On both the CSAP Reading and CSAP Writing assessments CPP children were 9.5 percentage points higher than their non-CPP peers.

Adams County District #14: An analysis of historical data indicates that preschoolers have consistently outscored their peers on the third grade CSAP reading assessment for the last five years.

◆ A second primary component of **Results Matter** is to measure long term outcomes for children who receive support as young children. Using the Student Assigned State ID Numbers (SASIDs), we will study the effects of interventions over time and collect and analyze data related to key outcomes such as performance on the CSAP, grade retention rates, need for special education services, and graduation rates. By doing this analysis on a state level, we will not only be able to track the outcomes for children who remain within a district, but also will be able to study the progress of children as they move from district to district.

Program Quality: Key to a Child's Success



It is only the preschool programs of high quality that provide lifelong benefits to young children. Identifying the highest quality programs where CPP children can be served is the first step for CPP district councils. Each CPP district council is also charged with the responsibility of sustaining quality in those programs. District councils are required to make at least two on-site visits per year to all individual providers in their district that serve CPP children.

In monitoring and supporting the improvement of these programs, district councils use “Colorado’s Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education Services,” which is a set of program standards developed from nationally accepted standards for preschool programs.

◆ **Results Matter:** A third primary component of Results Matter is evaluating program quality. Using measures that include self-study, independent review, and family feedback, evaluation processes and tools are being constructed to study the links between child outcomes and program quality indicators. These methods for evaluating program quality will be useful to practitioners, administrators, district councils, and policy makers as they engage in continuous quality improvement.

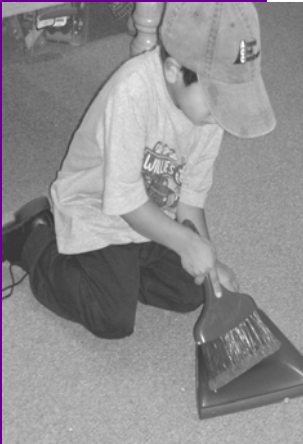
Already a number of Colorado Preschool Program district councils have chosen to monitor programs using systems that require independent review, self-studies and/or family feedback. Below is a description that identifies how those systems are currently being used across the state:

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—Revised (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford and Cryer) A method of measuring overall classroom quality, which rates classroom quality on a 7-point Likert scale, indicating a range of quality from inadequate (1) to excellent (7). In 2004, 51 district councils reported evaluating programs using the ECERS with an average rating of 5.81.

Accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): A national, voluntary, professionally sponsored assessment system for early childhood programs which was first developed in 1985. Programs engage in an extensive self-study which is then verified during a site visit by validators and then reviewed by a national commission. In 2004, 29 school districts were serving CPP children in 81 NAEYC accredited programs.

Qualistar Rating : As a nonprofit organization, Qualistar provides a four star rating system for early care and education programs . This system was first developed in 1997 and evaluates programs on five criteria; learning environment (as measured by the ECERS), family partnerships, training and education of staff, adult-to-child ratios and group size and accreditation. In 2004, 83 programs serving CPP children in 266 classrooms had received a Qualistar rating.

The benefits of CPP are much more than cognitive learning.



High quality preschool programs also focus on social-emotional development and enable children to develop initiative, understand there are consequences to their actions, persist in achieving their goals, and interact positively with peers.

In Fremont County six child care centers administered the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) in the Fall of 2004 and then as a post assessment in the Spring of 2005. DECA is a strength-based, primary prevention program designed to foster healthy social and emotional development. These programs found that the total number of protective factors (i.e. initiative, self-control, and attachment) increased for CPP children from 25% to 49%. In addition, "the 77 children in the Colorado Preschool Program made the most significant move in behavior with 27% having concerns in Fall 2004; this dropped to 14% with concerning behavior by spring 2005."

These are highly significant benefits not only to the children that attend preschool programs, but to their families as well.

Benefits to Colorado Preschool Program Families

"I see that the teachers respect the children and make them feel good and I want that for my children so they can be peacemakers and not aggressors. So I'm working hard with myself to be a good parent to my children and I am learning from the teachers."

Boulder Valley
School District
Parent

Families play the primary role in supporting their child's development. CPP seeks to support families in this role, especially when financial, physical and emotional stresses negatively impact parents' well-being and their ability to support their children.

Parent in Johnstown-Milliken: *"My child is learning exciting and new activities that help him and I work together as a team! It is bringing us closer together. Thank you!"*

Parent in Mapleton School District: *"We are blessed with this program, and are thankful. We don't have the ability to pay and our child wouldn't have a program if it wasn't for this one."*

Parent in Custer County: *"My child would have never made it through kindergarten without going to preschool first. She was very shy and afraid of being away from home. Also she is a slower learner than other children her age. Thanks to her teachers she will be ready to go to kindergarten next year. They gave her the start in life which she needed."*

Parent in Estes Park: *"I try my best with my two girls but it is hard. Thank you so much for teaching my daughter English. She "speaks" for me all the time."*

Parent in Academy District #20: *"Preschool opened up a whole new world for my son — social interaction, pride in himself, a structured learning environment and kindness."*



◆ Results Matter will survey families each year to determine their perceptions of their child's progress and their perceptions of the quality of the program their child attends.

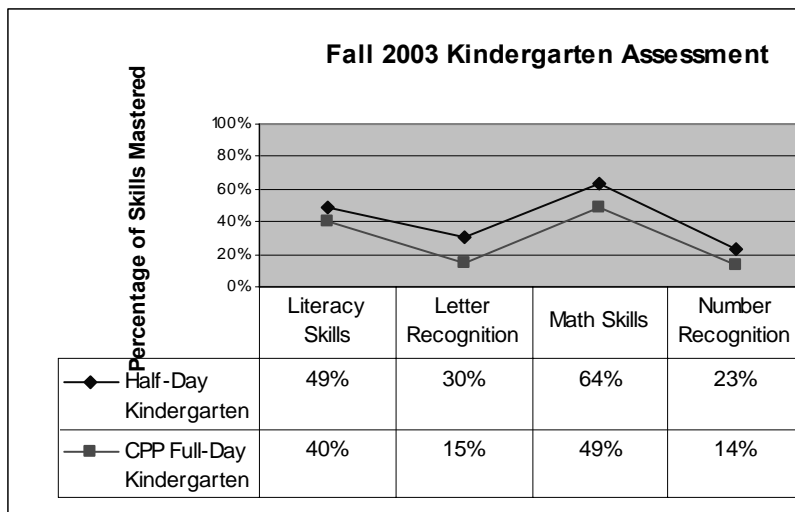
CPP Funded Full-Day Kindergarten

The Colorado Preschool Program is currently authorized to serve 1,500 children in the second half of their kindergarten day. In the 2005-06 school year, 28.2% of children in public schools participated in full-day kindergarten programs.

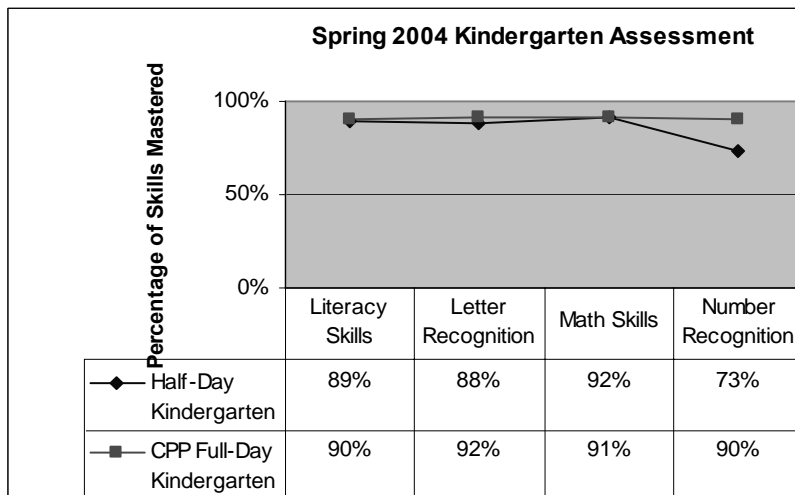
Each of these programs may look different across the state, but in CPP funded full-day kindergarten programs:

- Eligibility is determined for each individual child
- Programs must meet the accountability system developed for CPP (i.e. Programs must meet the Quality Standards, District Council members must provide on-site visits, the effectiveness of the program must be tracked and reported to CDE annually, and family support is required.)
- Class size is limited to 15 children, with a one to eight adult to child ratio.

Funding Source for Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK)	Number of Children
FDK funded in CPP	1,500
FDK funded in "Unsatisfactory Schools"	128
FDK funded by tuition, Title I and/or school district general funds	15,063
Total number of children served in FDK	16,691



School districts participating in the CPP funded full-day kindergarten are reporting that a longer kindergarten day leads to improved academic achievement and greater opportunities to close the achievement gap.



For instance, Adams County School District #14 reported data on the assessments given kindergarten children during the school year. Even though the full-day kindergarten students started the school year with greater deficits in all areas (Fall 2003 chart), they finished the year with skills slightly higher than their peers attending half-day kindergarten programs

More Evidence on the benefits of FDK

Canon City School District: Children in the CPP extended day kindergarten gained an average of 1 year and 2 months in literacy development in 8 months time. The average gain for the other children in the district was 9 months. The CPP students even performed better than the students in the other district full-day kindergarten programs which are tuition funded. It is remarkable that the most at-risk children did so well.

Harrison School District: At the end of the year in the full-day CPP classes, 82.81% of the students were reading at grade level, which is compared to 63.74% of the students in half-day classes reading at grade level.



Mapleton School District: 20% of our CPP full-day kindergarten students were on ILP's at the end of the 2004 school year. This is compared to the half-day kindergartens who had 63% of the students on ILP's at the end of the school year.

Brighton School District: The first grade teachers who are teaching children who attended CPP full-day kindergarten last year reported 56% are on grade level, with approximately 19% of the children on Individual Learning Plans. The district average is 49% of first graders that are on Individual Learning Plans.

"I am so happy with the progress of my children and I have this vision that my children will stay in school and have a profession when they are older."

Boulder Parent



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The Colorado Preschool Program would like to thank each of the CPP Coordinators and CPP district council members for their efforts in collecting and reporting data on the effectiveness of CPP.

We would also like to thank Karen Weaver and Mary Nelson Zurfluh for their special contributions to this report. And we want to extend a special thank you to the children, teachers and families whose pictures are featured throughout.

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