



# Colorado Preschool Program Legislative Report 2015



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Welcome to the CPP 2015 Legislative Report!

Each year, the Colorado Department of Education reports to the Colorado General Assembly on the effectiveness of the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). We are pleased to present you with the 2015 report which provides highlights of how CPP was implemented in the 2013-2014 school year by 172 school districts including the Charter School Institute. The tables in this report illustrate the powerful outcomes for children who participate in the Colorado Preschool Program.

We wish to thank you for your continued support of CPP. This important initiative continues to produce long-lasting effects that support children's success now and in the future.

Respectfully,

Robert K. Hammond

Commissioner of Education

### **New to the Colorado Preschool Program?**

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) provides the opportunity for eligible children to attend half-day or full-day preschool or full-day kindergarten. Children are determined eligible for CPP based on certain risk factors present in their lives. These risk factors have been shown to be associated with later challenges in school.

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.

CPP is managed by local school districts and their preschool advisory councils. Each participating school district is given a predetermined number of half-day slots to serve eligible children. Two types of slots can be allocated to districts: CPP slots, which can be used to serve eligible preschoolers, and Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) slots, which can be used to serve eligible preschoolers or to provide full-day opportunities for eligible kindergarteners. Two half-day CPP or ECARE slots can be combined to create full-day opportunities for preschool children with very high needs.



**CPP in 2013-2014—By the Numbers**

**Slots Authorized by the Legislature: 23,360**

CPP— 20,160

ECARE— 3,200

**Total Enrollment: 22,359\***

**Enrollment by Age:**

Children under three — 359

Three-year-olds — 5,194

Four-year-olds — 15,297

Kindergarteners — 1,509

**Enrollment by Length of Program Day:**

Half-Day Preschool Enrollment — 19,849

Full-Day Preschool Enrollment — 1,001

Full-Day Kindergarten Enrollment — 1,509

\*Number of children enrolled is lower than authorized slot total because some children are served in a full-day program using two slots

**School Districts Participating in CPP: 96%**

Including the Charter School Institute

**Total Program Funding: \$79,811,309**

Preschool CPP and ECARE Funding — \$74,618,543

Full-Day Kindergarten ECARE Funding— \$5,192,766

Compared to \$5.444 billion total funding in K-12

**Colorado Average Funding per Slot: \$3,417**

Compared to \$4,629 — national average of state preschool spending per slot (*The State of Preschool 2013*, National Institute of Early Education Research)

**Estimated Unmet Need for CPP**

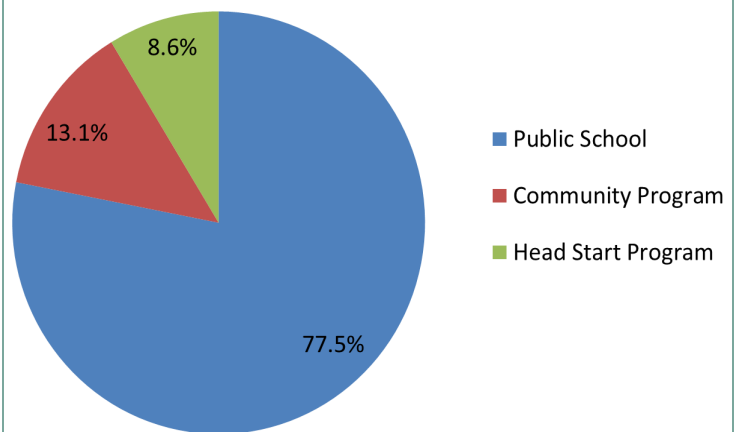
Using data from the State Demography Office and state pupil counts, CDE has calculated that as many as **11,203** at-risk four-year-olds had no preschool available to them through either CPP or Head Start in the 2014-2015 school year. This calculation factors in the average number of children in first through eighth grade who are eligible for free or reduced price meals as a percentage of the total first through eighth grade student population.

**Children on Local CPP Waiting Lists: 5,746**

Self-reported by school districts. Exact level of need is estimated to be significantly higher as described above.

**Figure 1**

**Where CPP Children Were Served**



**Charter School Participation**

In the 2013-2014 school year, 385 children with CPP funding were served in charter schools including High Point Academy, Community Leadership Academy and schools in Denver, Clear Creek, West End, Canon City, Greeley, Jefferson County and Park County School Districts.

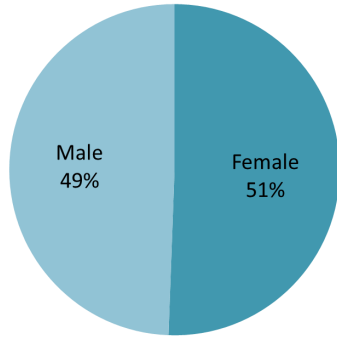
**Districts Giving Vision and Hearing Screenings:**

162 of 172 participating school districts



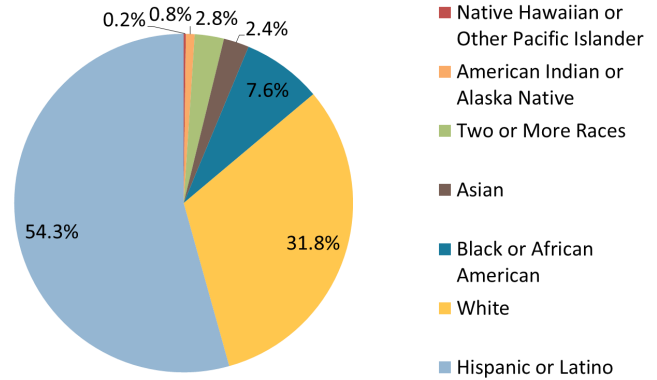
**CPP in 2013-2014—By the Numbers (cont.)**

**Figure 2**



**Gender of Children Served by CPP**

**Figure 3**

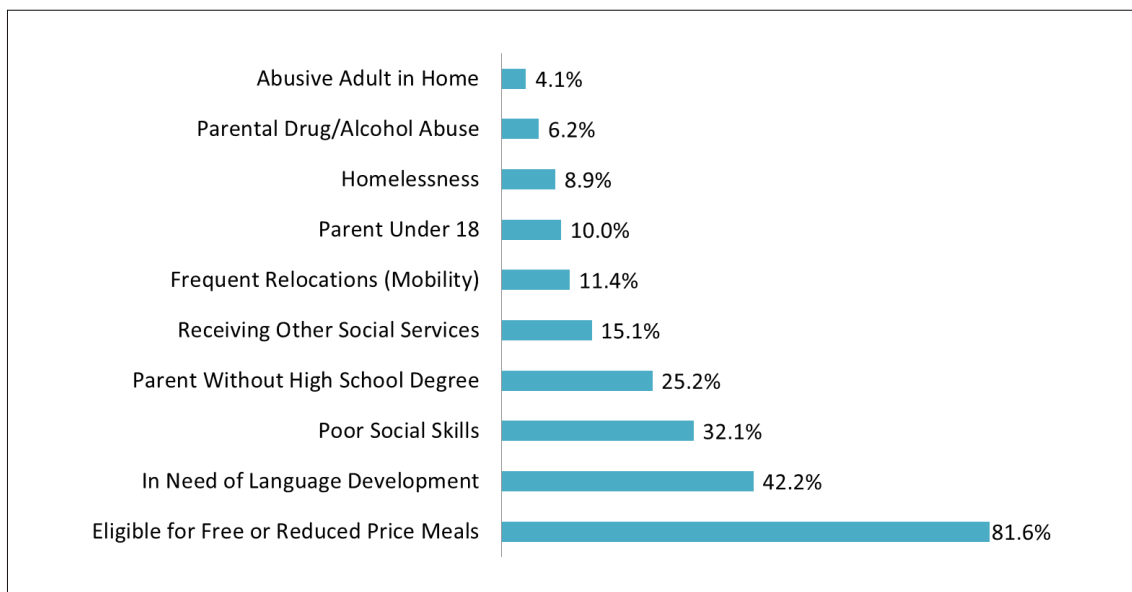


**Race/Ethnicity of Children Served by CPP**

**CPP Eligibility Factors**

Children are determined eligible for CPP based on certain risk factors present in their lives. These risk factors have been shown to be associated with later challenges in school. In order to be eligible for CPP, four-year-olds must have at least one risk factor present, but most children served have two or more. Three-year-olds must have at least three factors present. Each line of Figure 4 illustrates the percentage of CPP-funded children who have that risk factor.

**Figure 4**



## Recent Changes in CPP

### Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE)

During the 2013 legislative session, the Colorado legislature created a new type of Colorado Preschool Program slot known as the Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement or ECARE slot. The intention of this new approach was to allow school districts more flexibility in serving our youngest learners. ECARE slots may be used to fund half-day preschool, full-day preschool or full-day kindergarten. School districts may change the usage of their allotted ECARE slots from year-to-year based on the needs of their early childhood population.

The legislature authorized 3,200 ECARE slots during the 2013 legislative session and an additional 5,000 ECARE slots during the 2014 session for a total of 8,200 ECARE slots.

In the 2013-2014 school year, districts used ECARE slots to serve an additional:

- 1,133 Half-Day Preschoolers
- 279 Full-Day Preschoolers (2 slots for each full-day child)
- 1,509 Full-Day Kindergarteners

In 2014-2015, districts are using ECARE slots as follows:

- 1,718 Half-Day Preschoolers
- 589 Full-Day Preschoolers (2 slots for each full-day child)
- 5,304 Full-Day Kindergarteners

These recent expansions make it possible to provide a high-quality early childhood education experience for as many as 28,360 eligible children each year.



“As a result of the ECARE funding for kindergarten, we were able to provide full-day kindergarten to six students whose families could not afford the tuition our district charges for participation in full-day kindergarten. We believe the support of ECARE which increased the number of full-day kindergarten students is responsible for our having the highest mid-year DIBELS scores we have experienced in over 10 years. There is no doubt that the additional funding had a positive impact on how students are performing academically at our elementary school.”

Archuleta School District

## Recent Changes in CPP

### Local Impact of Early Childhood At Risk Enhancement (ECARE)

Several school districts commented on the impact of ECARE implementation when writing their annual report:

**Roaring Fork RE-1:** “We used our 65 ECARE slots to serve full-day kindergarteners in our four elementary schools. We were thrilled to be able to help children at risk access full-day programming. Without ECARE, these students would have fallen further behind their more economically advantaged peers. The addition of ECARE funding allowed us to hire more staff so we could decrease child-to-staff ratios and helped schools provide intensive academic instruction to students needing extra support.”

**Montrose County RE-1J:** “By providing full-day kindergarten for 42 children, we have seen significant growth in academics, language development and social skills. Test scores showed significant improvements in reading, writing and math. As of the end of January, iReady diagnostic results in the full-day classrooms showed a 4.3 average point increase over the half-day classrooms. The children identified as ECARE students scored even higher with a 5.7 point gain over the half-day students. Furthermore, students have doubled their Cold Write assessment scores. January test scores show full-day students are twice as likely to be able to write complete sentences on topic with correct capitalization and punctuation.”

**Hinsdale County RE-1:** “Funding for our one Kindergarten ECARE slot ensured that we could support professional development for our kindergarten teacher who began implementation of Teaching Strategies GOLD this year. The funding also contributes to the overall sustainability of our full-day kindergarten program. Due to budget constraints, we have considered cutting our full-day kindergarten program, ECARE funding helped us to save it. ECARE is extremely important funding to us.”

**Canon City RE-1:** “Canon City focused their ECARE award at one of their neediest elementary schools and were able to use the funds to open a third kindergarten classroom. The additional classroom allowed the district to dramatically reduce the child-teacher ratios at this school from about 30 students to one adult to 14 students to one adult. A significant increase in mid-year DIBELS scores at the targeted elementary school occurred during the 2013-14 school year. It is believed that this increase is due to the improved student-teacher ratios.”

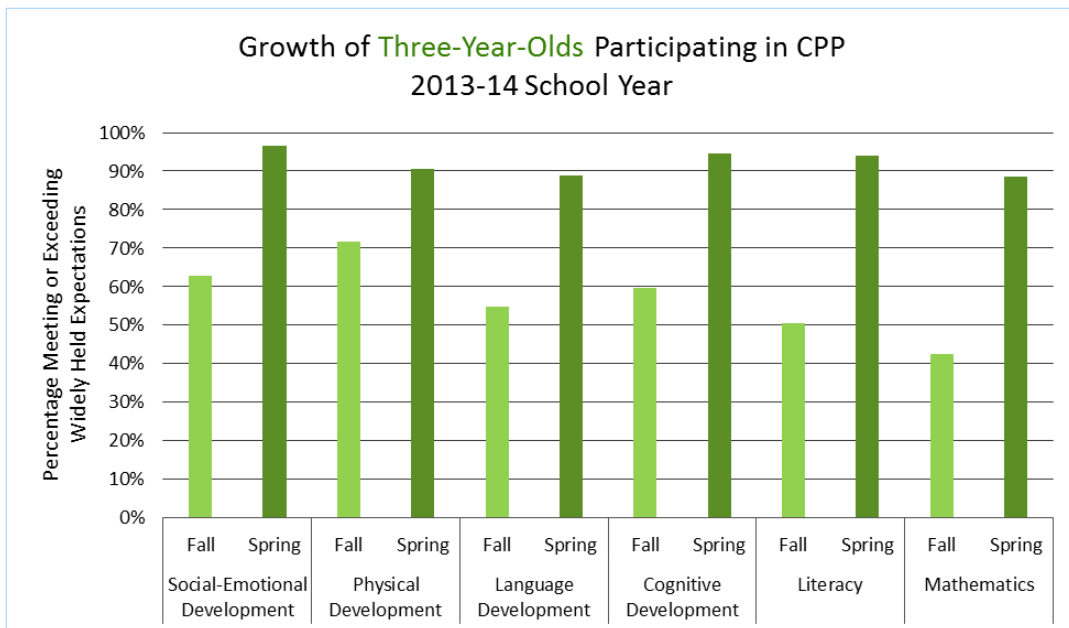


## Colorado Preschool Program—Measuring Growth in the Preschool Years

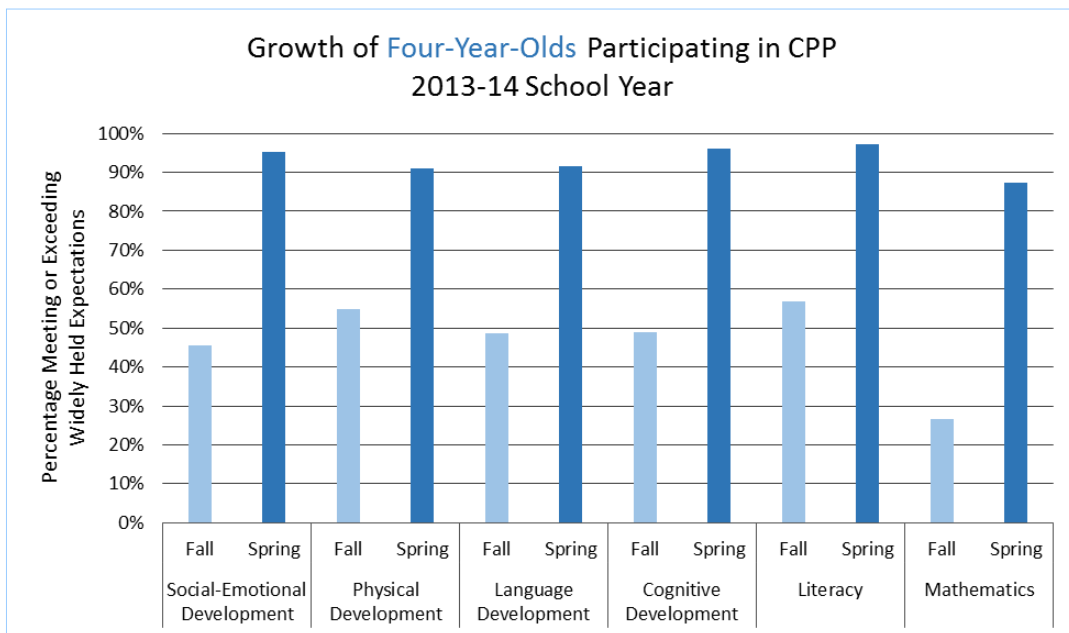
All programs serving children funded through CPP use formative assessment to monitor progress and illustrate growth. Teachers and families observe children in the course of their everyday routines and activities and measure their progress between fall and spring in key areas of learning and development.

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate results for three-year-olds and four-year-olds who participated in CPP. Information is gathered to see whether children were below, meeting, or exceeding age expectations in the fall and in the spring. Results are then compared to illustrate growth achieved through the school year. In every domain, the percentage of children in CPP who meet or exceed age expectations increases significantly in the course of just one year.

**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**





## Colorado Preschool Program—Measuring Growth in the Preschool Years

A more sophisticated method can be used to look at results by focusing on the proportion of objectives met in each of six readiness indicator categories. Figure 7 shows the proportion of four-year-olds in CPP who met age expectations for at least 80% of objectives in each readiness indicator area.

**Figure 7**

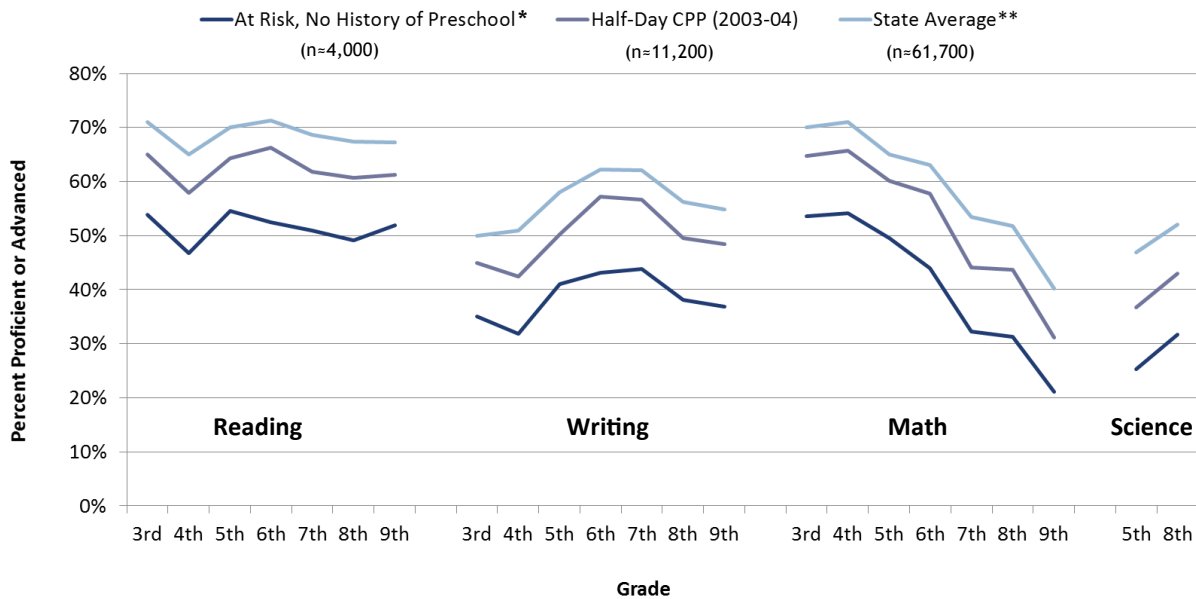
Four-Year-Olds Meeting Age Expectations in at least 80% of Readiness Indicators					
Social-Emotional Development	85.5%	Cognitive Development	89.6%		
Physical Development	95.0%	Literacy	79.8%		
Language Development	81.7%	Mathematics	65.8%		
					n≈13,500

## Colorado Preschool Program—Long-Term Impact on Student Achievement

CDE has been documenting longitudinal academic outcomes for a cohort of children participating in CPP since 2003-04 using annual CSAP/TCAP results. It is clear that graduates of CPP have a lasting benefit from the program compared to other at-risk children who did not participate in CPP (see below for a full definition of this matched comparison group). In the analysis illustrated in Figure 8, we examined results through ninth grade—the latest data available for the earliest CPP cohort that can be traced. (Note: science is not tested in ninth grade.) As demonstrated in the past, we see that on average, CPP graduates outperform other at-risk children who did not participate in CPP, even as far out as ninth grade. **In other words, academic improvements relative to similar peers do not fade out.**

**CSAP/TCAP Grades 3-9 Outcomes**

**Figure 8**



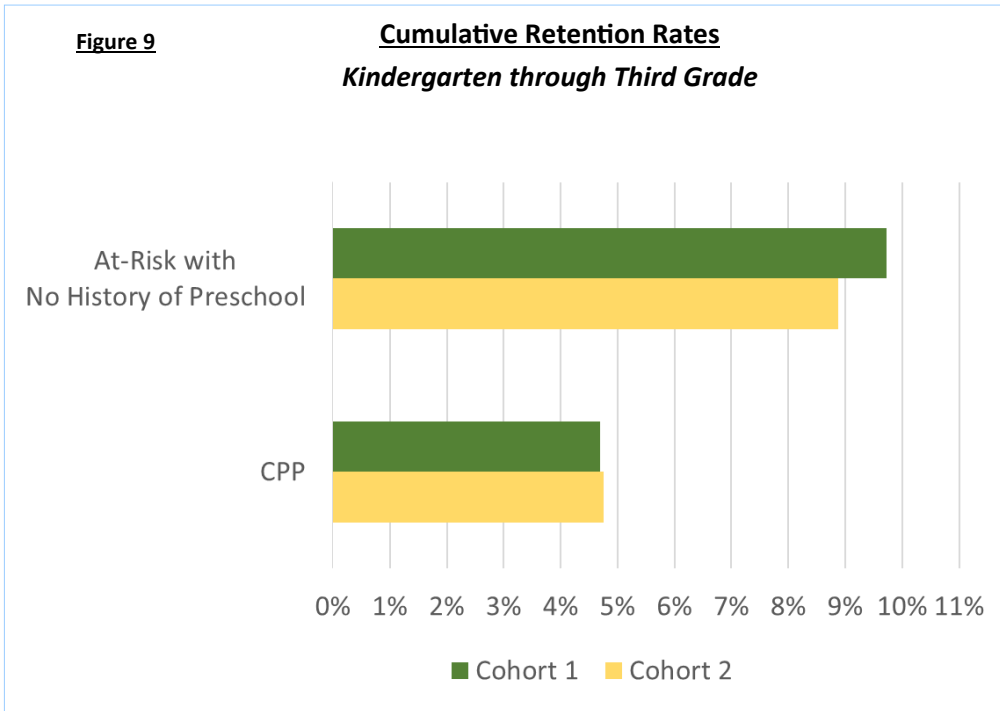
\*At-Risk, No History of Preschool is a matched comparison group and is defined as children eligible for free or reduced price meals in first grade during the same year as the CPP cohort, with no history of preschool in CDE data collections.

\*\*State Average includes everyone assessed in the year corresponding with the expected grade/year of assessment for the 2003-04 CPP cohort. Therefore, “3<sup>rd</sup> grade” results for State Average equals 3<sup>rd</sup> grade overall results from 2008, “4<sup>th</sup> grade” = 2009, etc.

In order to align with Colorado’s new academic standards, CDE introduced the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) in 2012—seventh grade in this particular chart. Results from CSAP and TCAP are comparable across years.



Colorado Preschool Program—Long-Term Impact on Grade Retention



	N Size	
	At-Risk with No History of Preschool	CPP
Cohort 1	17,642	10,808
Cohort 2	16,856	10,798

Cohort 1:

**CPP** = CPP in 2007-08, K in 2008-09

**At Risk, No History of Preschool** = No history of preschool, eligible for free or reduced price meals in first grade in 2009-10

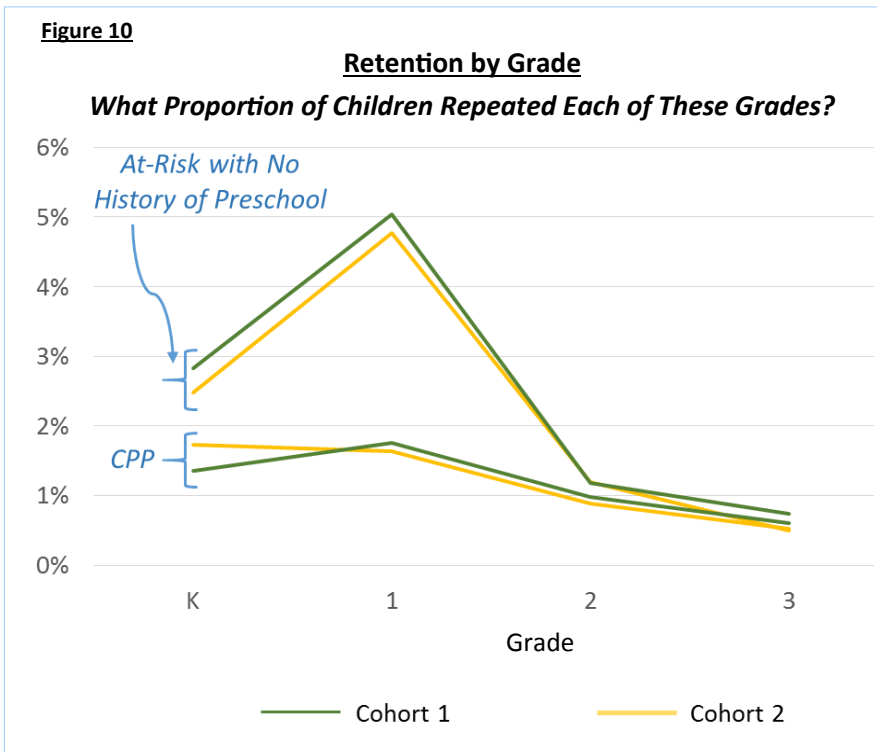
Cohort 2:

**CPP** = CPP in 2008-09, K in 2009-10

**At Risk, No History of Preschool** = No history of preschool, eligible for free or reduced price meals in first grade in 2010-11

One of the added benefits of CPP is that it is associated with a reduced rate of retention—in other words, children who have a CPP experience are held back in a grade less often than other at-risk children who did not attend CPP. Figure 9 above shows the overall proportion of children from two different cohorts who were held back at any point in grades K-3 (i.e., cumulative retention rate).

Figure 10 breaks it down further, showing retention rates in each grade (K-3). Compared to similar groups of at-risk children who did not attend publicly funded preschool, CPP is associated with a reduced need for retention by as much as one-third in first grade and a lower rate in subsequent grades.



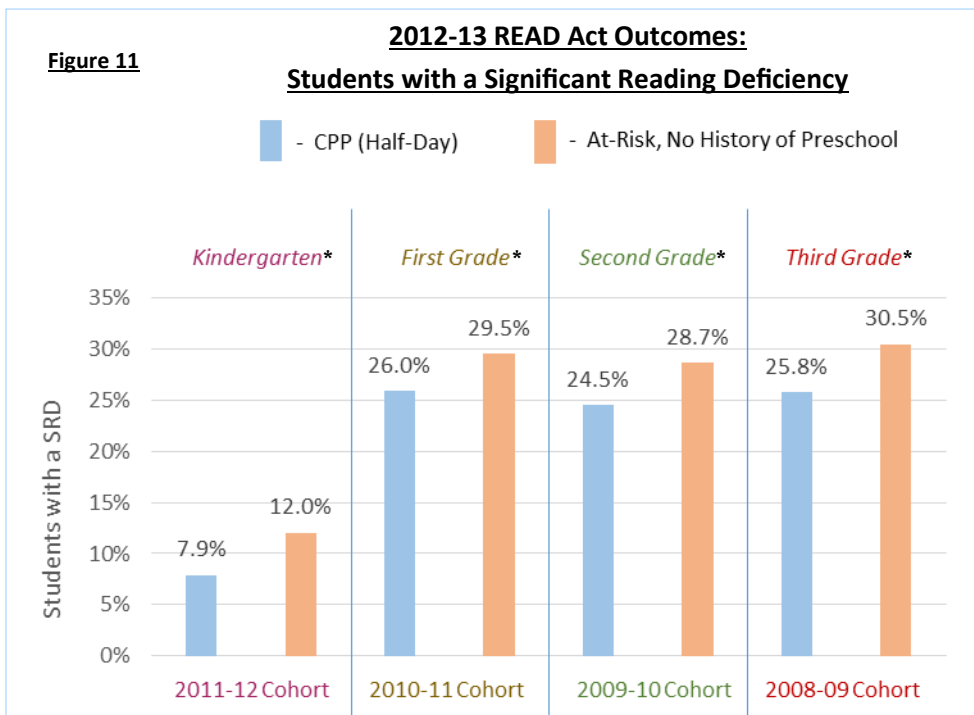
Grade retention is just one mechanism in a school’s toolbox of intervention strategies. Implementing strategies to support children who have fallen behind puts pressure on school resources and requires additional expenditures. Retention effectively costs Colorado taxpayers an extra year’s worth of per-pupil spending. Not only does the educational system pay the cost of later remediation, but children do as well, in the form of lost opportunities and lower self-confidence in their own learning. While high-quality preschool requires significant investment, it is often less costly than retention. The return on investment is evident in the positive effects on social-emotional and physical development, early literacy and future academic success, as evidenced throughout this report and the wider research base.

## Colorado Preschool Program and the Colorado READ Act

The Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (READ Act) was signed into law in 2012. It repealed the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) effective summer 2013, keeping many of the elements of CBLA such as a focus on K-3 literacy, assessment and individual plans for students reading below grade level. The READ Act differs from CBLA by focusing on students in K-3 identified as having a significant reading deficiency (SRD). Children determined to have an SRD require the most intensive instructional needs. These children will not make sufficient progress with core instruction and differentiation alone. SRD status delineates requirements for parent communication and provides per-pupil funding to support intervention for identified children. This funding can be used to provide full-day kindergarten, scientific- or evidence-based interventions, summer school and/or tutoring services.

**READ Outcomes for Colorado Preschool Program** Figure 11 illustrates rates of SRD from 2012-13 among four consecutive cohorts of children who were in CPP in 2008-2012 and matched comparison groups of children who were at risk but did not have any history of being in preschool (see bottom of p.8 for a full definition of this comparison group). The results are striking: children who were in CPP were significantly less likely to need intensive literacy supports than other at-risk children who were not in CPP. These data mirror trends in CSAP/TCAP data on p.8 and illustrate the lasting outcomes for CPP-funded children well into elementary school.

*Note: 2013 was the first year for READ Act data collection. As with any new data collection, challenges prevented some districts from reporting all of their students. Also, there is some variation in the amount of training teachers receive, and the protocols used for testing students.*



2012-13 Colorado Statewide SRD

Grade	SRD Rate— Statewide
K	7.4%
1	20.0%
2	19.1%
3	19.3%

N Size

	CPP	At-Risk, No History of Preschool
2011-12 Cohort	10,274	15,640
2010-11 Cohort	10,844	16,281
2009-10 Cohort	10,636	15,256
2008-09 Cohort	9,660	14,455

\*Each cohort includes a small fraction of children who did not follow a normal grade progression because they were either held back or skipped a grade, and thus may have appeared in a higher or lower grade for the 2012-13 READ Act data collection.

“We are finding the same thing here in Roaring Fork schools that the research supports nationwide; access to quality early childhood programming is helping to close the achievement gap. Nearly all of our ‘SRD’ (significant reading deficiency) students come to us without preschool and are lagging behind their peers in other signs of school readiness. Therefore, as a principal strategy for closing the achievement gap, we are emphasizing access to early childhood education for low income and at risk students.”

Dr. Rob Stein, Chief Academic Officer, Roaring Fork School District



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