

Colorado Preschool Program

Legislative Report 2022

Submitted to: Colorado General Assembly
By: Colorado Department of Education



COLORADO
Department of Education



**Preschool through
Third Grade (P-3) Office**

Teaching and Learning Unit

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Welcome

As our nation and the world continues to manage the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Colorado school districts and their local community partners have maintained their commitment to providing high quality preschool education for our state's children. Despite the issues posed by the pandemic, the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) again shows positive outcomes for children in the 2020-21 school year.



The school year began with programs working hard to ensure health and safety protocols were in place so in-person learning could be sustained. With teachers and children adapting to new safety measures, CPP funded programs provided learning opportunities for over 18,000 3- and 4-year-olds in 176 of 179 school districts across the state.

Children funded through CPP again showed positive outcomes over the school year. In the fall, 46.6 percent of children were meeting or exceeding age expectations across all domains. By the spring, 87.9 percent of children were meeting or exceeding these age expectations. As in previous years, CDE data shows that when compared with children with similar risk factors, children funded by CPP are identified with lower rates of significant reading deficiencies as they entered kindergarten and were held back at lower rates.

I not only celebrate these continued positive outcomes for CPP, I am pleased to see the progress in planning for implementation of universal preschool for Colorado. The initiative has the potential to, combined with CPP, provide preschool education for all of Colorado's children while maintaining the state's commitment to supporting children who are at-risk for educational challenges. Colorado's continued strong support for high quality preschool will undoubtedly advance the department's top priority that all children read at grade level by third grade.

It's an exciting time in early childhood education in Colorado!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katy Anthes". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Katy Anthes, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education



Note about Data Availability and the Impact of COVID-19

While districts nimbly navigated new policies, protocols, and procedures at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there continued to be lasting impacts on the ability to collect data in the 2020-21 school year. The lack of data impacted CDE's ability to complete some analyses, such as unmet need estimates and the rates of significant reading deficiency identification related to the Colorado READ Act.

A Brief History of CPP

Now in its 33rd year, CPP provides funding for up to 29,360 children annually for preschool education, having served more than 440,000 children since its inception.

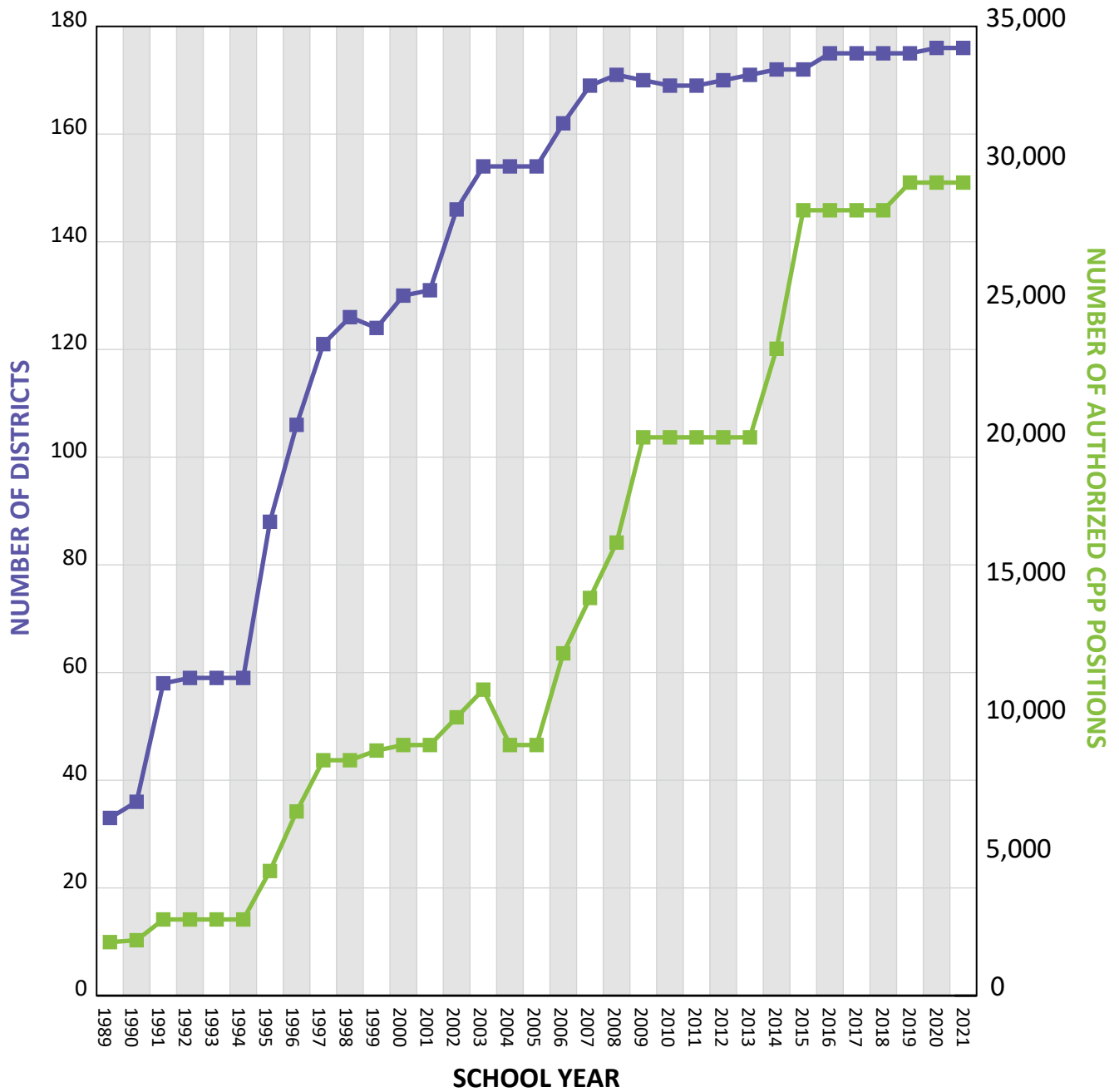
The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) is a state-funded preschool program for at-risk children administered by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Enacted by the Colorado General Assembly in 1988, CPP currently provides preschool funding for up to 29,360 young children who have certain risk factors associated with later challenges in school. Children who are eligible for CPP attend high-quality, mixed delivery early childhood programs. These programs may be located in a school district or other settings such as local child care centers, community preschools, or Head Start programs.

CPP has undergone multiple changes over the last three decades, expanding from 2,000 positions in 33 districts in 1989 to close to 30,000 positions in nearly every school district by 2021. Since 2013, the General Assembly has expanded CPP three times through additional Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) positions -- a more flexible type of position that provides increased opportunity and access for eligible children. Some of the growth in positions as seen in Figure 1 is due to these additional 9,200 ECARE positions. This growth, in addition to the number of participating districts, is also illustrated in Figure 1.



The Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) program provides 9,200 CPP positions that districts have been able to use for either half- or full-day preschool or full-day kindergarten. With the advent of state funding for full-day kindergarten in the 2018-19 school year, ECARE positions have been used for either half- or full-day preschool.

Figure 1: Growth in CPP Authorized Positions and Participating School Districts, 1989 - 2021



CPP by the Numbers

Quick Reference Statistics (2020-21)

176

Districts Participating
in CPP

18,636

Total Children
Served in CPP

Average
Funding
Per Child

\$5,484

29,360

Total Authorized
CPP Positions



\$4,187

Average
Funding
Per Position
Utilized*

\$102,200,149

Total CPP Program Funding

5,774

Total Children
Served with
Two Positions
for Full-Day¹
Services

31%

Percent of
CPP Children
Served with
Two Positions for
Full-Day Services



47.3%

Percent of
Positions
utilized
for Full-Day
Services

*Funding reported here is the average for one half-day position. However, districts may use two half-day positions to create full-day positions for some children.

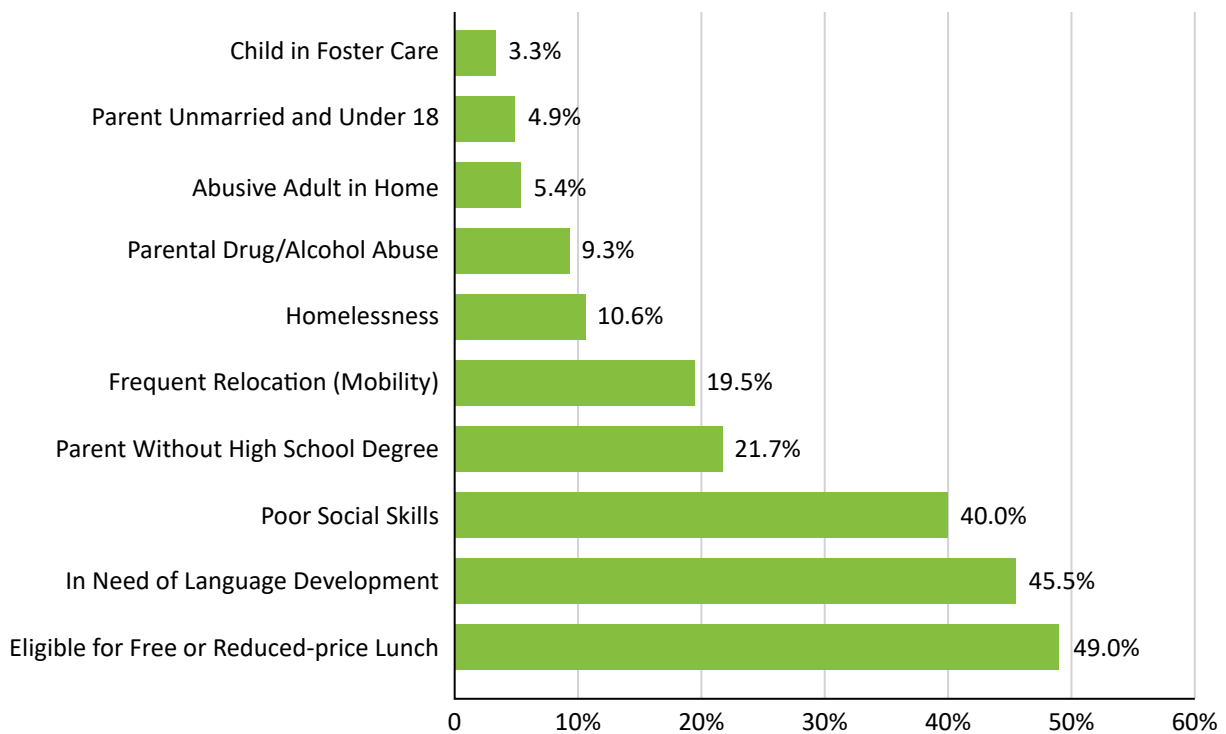
¹ A full-day position funded through the Colorado Preschool Program requires that a minimum of 720 preschool contact hours must be provided over the course of a school year. This averages to 20 contact hours per week for a full-day position and 10 contact hours per week for a half-day position.

CPP Eligibility

CPP currently serves 3- and 4-year-old children who are identified with certain eligibility risk factors. State statute directs the program to serve children with the greatest need and designates 10 qualifying eligibility factors, which may impact a child’s future academic achievement. To qualify for participation, 4-year-old children must be identified with at least one eligibility factor, while 3-year-old children must be identified with at least three factors. School districts are responsible for screening children and determining their eligibility for the program. Figure 2 details the percentage of children funded through CPP qualifying for each eligibility factor. Children may qualify for more than one factor; therefore, the percentages total more than 100 percent.

Figure 2: Percentage of Children Qualifying for CPP by the Eligibility Risk Factors 2020-21

Each line represents the percentage of children served in CPP with that risk factor in 2020-2021



School districts may use additional eligibility factors with CDE approval. Additional factors must be specific to the community, and their impact on academic success must be supported by research.² In the 2020-21 school year, eight districts (4.5 percent of districts participating in CPP) reported using eligibility factors not explicitly identified in statute, such as family income levels that are higher than the criteria for free- or reduced-price lunch but lower than the community’s self-sufficiency standard.

Prevalence of Risk Factors

The most common risk factors used to qualify children for CPP were eligibility for free- or reduced-price lunch (FRL), language development, and poor social skills. These were the same top three qualifying factors as in 2018-19 and 2019-20. The least common eligibility factors used to enroll children in CPP were the following: a parent of the child was less than 18 years old and unmarried at the time of the birth; an abusive adult in the home; and a child receiving foster care services. These were the same least common qualifying factors as in 2018-19 and 2019-20.

The percentage of children qualifying for each eligibility risk factor dropped from 2019-20 to 2020-21, with the largest drops seen in FRL eligibility, poor social skills, and in need of language development. Some of this decline may be related to a general enrollment decline seen in the state in 2020-21, especially in preschool and kindergarten. CPP enrollment declined by 4,838 children (20.6 percent) from 2019-20 to 2020-21. This school year marked the first decline in public preschool through 12th grade enrollment since 1988.³ Districts reported that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their CPP screening and enrollment processes in the 2020-21 school year, indicating that this decline does not indicate a decline in eligibility, but a decline in enrollment.

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We experienced a significant reduction in the number of students who accessed the part-day program (approximately 30 students). Families who were already home with their children shared that they would prefer to not risk the exposure [to COVID-19] for the year and did not want their children learning online. We also heard from a few families that they were concerned about their children wearing masks, and that they did not want to send their children to school if they could not visit the classroom. Finally, some families decided to keep their children in their small, family childcare settings so that there was a reduced chance of being quarantined and having the parent's work interrupted.

Englewood 1 School District

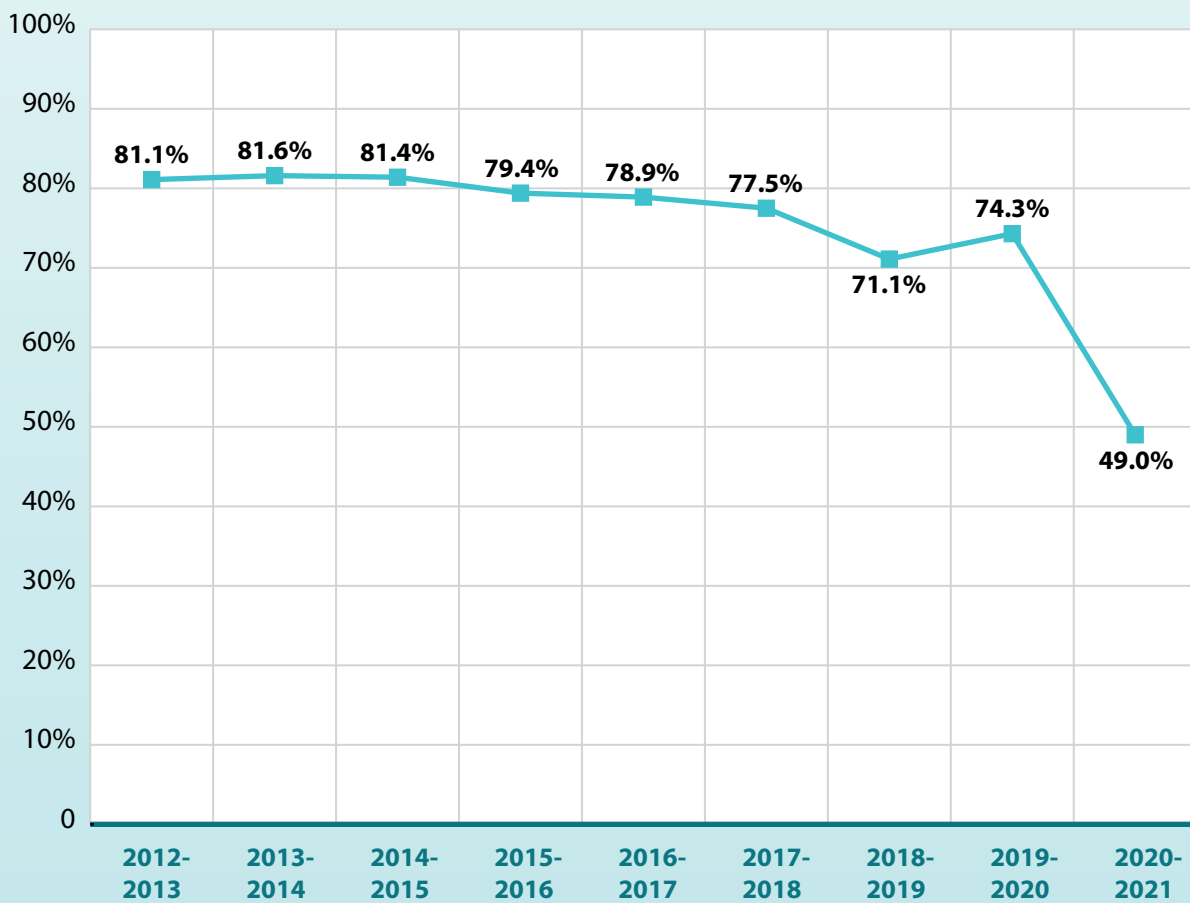
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³ <https://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/newsrelease-enrollment>

Eligibility Based on FRL Status

As stated previously, the percentage of children qualifying for CPP based on their eligibility for FRL dropped from 74.3 percent in 2019-20 to 49 percent in 2020-21. This is the most significant change to FRL eligibility in the last nine years, as seen in Figure 3. One explanation of this drop is that school lunches were provided free of charge to all children due to the pandemic, eliminating the requirement for families to apply for FRL eligibility.

Figure 3: Trend in CPP Children Qualifying for CPP Based on FRL Eligibility





Eligibility Based on Language

Another way children may be eligible for CPP is by speaking a language other than English at home. In Colorado, emerging bilingual children make up 20 percent of the state's birth to 18 population.⁴ Research shows that children who are multilingual outperform their peers on tasks that require high degrees of memory skill and cognitive flexibility. Culturally and linguistically responsive policies and practices that support children and families in their home language are critical to a child's educational success. One high quality support for dual language learners is dual language programming. Research shows that dual language immersion models are associated with improved developmental, linguistic, and academic outcomes for all students.⁵

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Eagle County Schools (ECS) is committed to multi-lingual opportunities across the district so that every graduating student can speak multiple languages. Starting in 2014, ECS Early Childhood Department started Dual Language Instruction in six of our nine programs while providing home language support in our other three programs. In order to make this happen, we committed to staffing one bi-lingual teacher in each of our classrooms. In order to support our teachers in this endeavor, we do provide a dual language new hire training ... [and] we currently have 48 out of our 83 classroom staff who are bilingual in at least English and Spanish. We also require that our community provider has at least one teacher in all classrooms participating in CPP, who is bilingual in English and Spanish to meet the language needs of the children and families served by the program.

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⁴ <https://www.coloradokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-Kids-Count-final-low-res-4.15.20.pdf>

⁵ <https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-07/CEP-DLLEL-pullout-070620-FINAL.pdf>

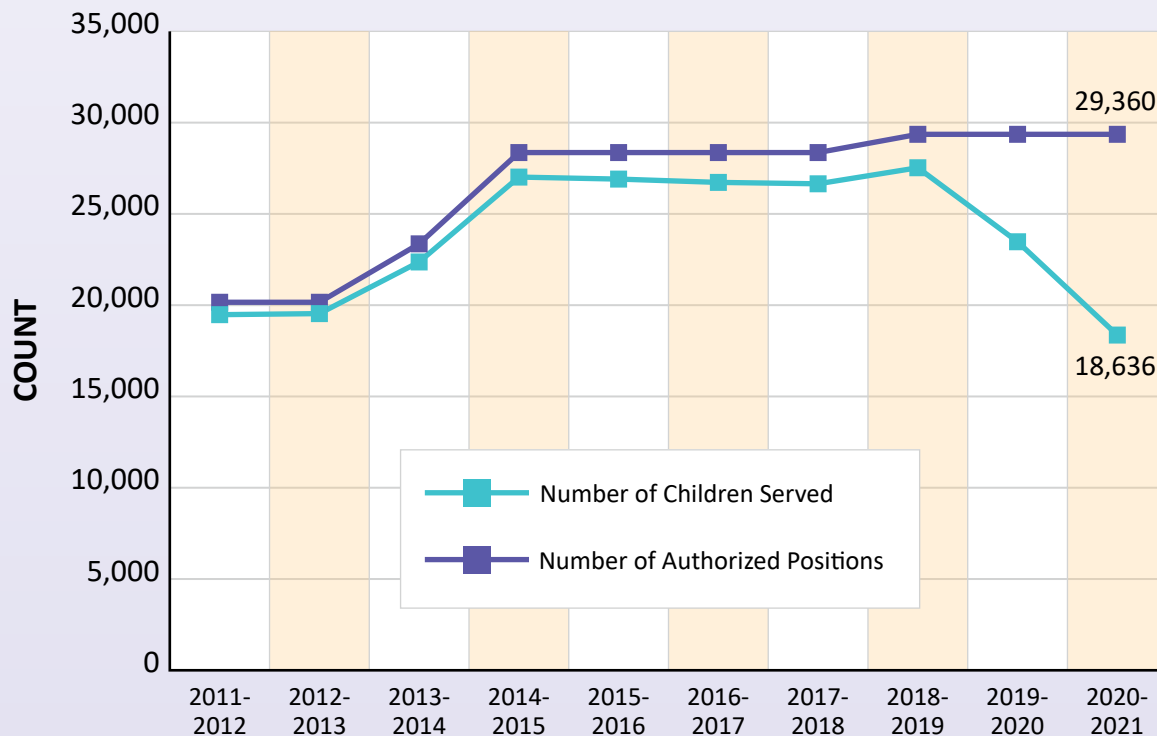
CPP Enrollment

Enrollment in CPP has fluctuated over the years, as the number of positions available has shifted due to policy initiatives such as the implementation of ECARE positions. As shown in Figure 4, the total number of children served climbed steadily from the 2012-13 school year through the 2014-15 school year before leveling off until the 2018-19 school year.

Enrollment numbers fell from 23,474 children in 2019-20 to 18,636 children in the 2020-21 school year for a couple of reasons. First, the full-day kindergarten policy loosened the cap on combining positions for full-day services by allowing districts to combine all ECARE positions, a certain position type, with other position types without being subject to the 5 percent statewide cap. Consequently, the 2019-20 school year saw a large spike in the number of positions being combined to provide full-day preschool services. Thus, while it appeared that fewer children were being served, a higher percentage were served with full-day programming.

Enrollment declines in the 2020-21 school year can also be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, which also impacted enrollment from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Many families elected to keep their preschool-aged children home rather than enroll them in a program during the pandemic. Though enrollment has declined, this should not lead one to conclude that fewer children are eligible for CPP -- only that fewer eligible children were served during this year, as a result of family choices in relation to the pandemic.

Figure 4: Trend in CPP Enrollment, 2011-12 through 2020-21

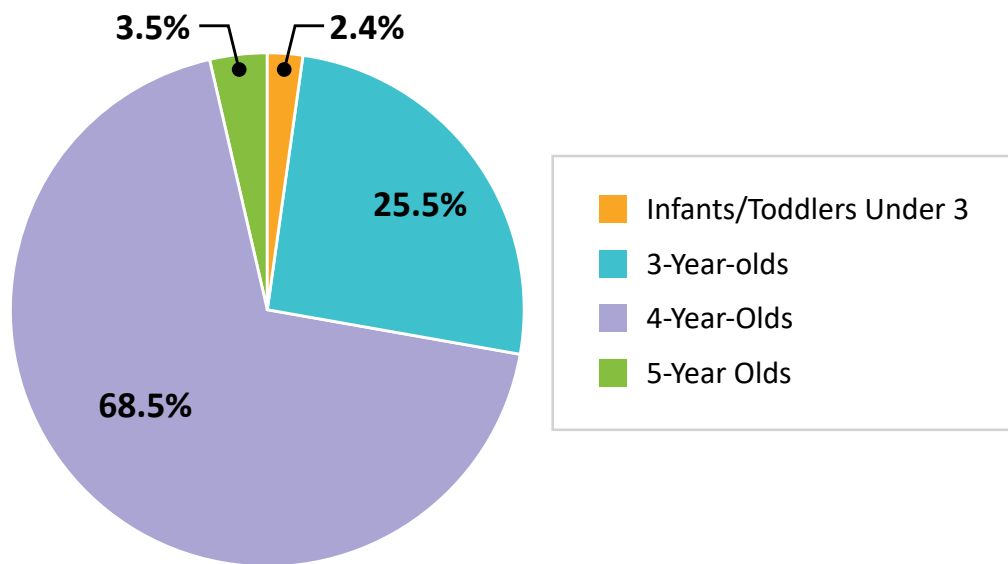




Enrollment by Demographics

The age distribution of children served in CPP remained relatively stable between 2019-20 and 2020-21. The most noticeable difference was a slight decrease in the percentage of 3-year-old children served, falling from 27.3 percent in 2019-20 to 25.5 percent in 2020-21 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: CPP Enrollment by Age in 2020-21^{6 7 8}



Similar to other years, the gender distribution of children served by CPP is almost split evenly. In 2020-21, 50.3 percent of children served by CPP were female, and 49.7 percent were male.

Figure 6: CPP Enrollment by Gender in 2020-21



⁶ Some districts are able to serve younger children through a waiver granted at the initiation of the Colorado Preschool Program. This waiver is no longer available to other districts.

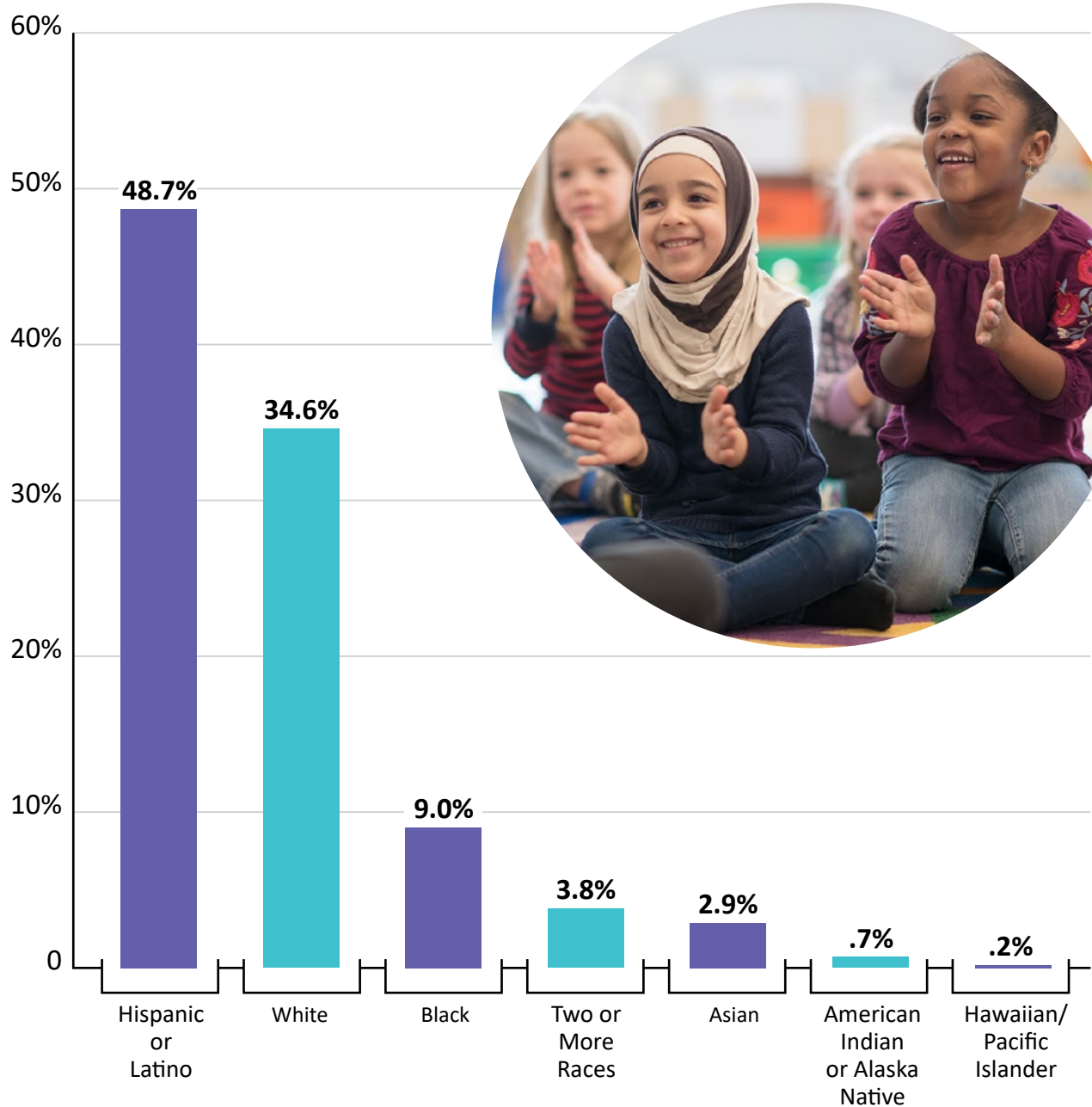
⁷ Eligible 3-year-old children must reach the age of 3 on or before the school district's kindergarten age cutoff date, which can be no later than October 1. Eligible 4-year-old children must be age-eligible for kindergarten the following year and reach 4 on or before October 1. Eligible 5-year-old children must be age-eligible for kindergarten the following year.

⁸ The 5-year-old children included here are not age-eligible for kindergarten and thus, are participating in CPP as a preschooler.



Similar to recent years, nearly half (48.7 percent) of all children served by CPP in 2020-21 were Hispanic or Latino. Slightly more than a third (34.6 percent) of children were White. The remaining races and ethnicities accounted for 16.7 percent of CPP funded children. The distribution of racial and ethnic groups served by CPP has remained fairly consistent over time (Figure 7).

Figure 7: CPP Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity in 2020-21





While Figure 7 describes the race and ethnicity of children served through CPP, Table 1 below provides a comparison to general K-12 enrollment statewide, when limiting general enrollment to students who are eligible for FRL. As is shown below, CPP is fairly representative of statewide demographics by race and ethnicity, although White students may be overrepresented and Hispanic students may be underrepresented. This could be attributed to additional legislated risk factors for 3-year-old children participating in CPP or potential bias in enrollment and outreach.

Table 1: Percentage of Enrollment, by Race and Ethnicity in 2020-21

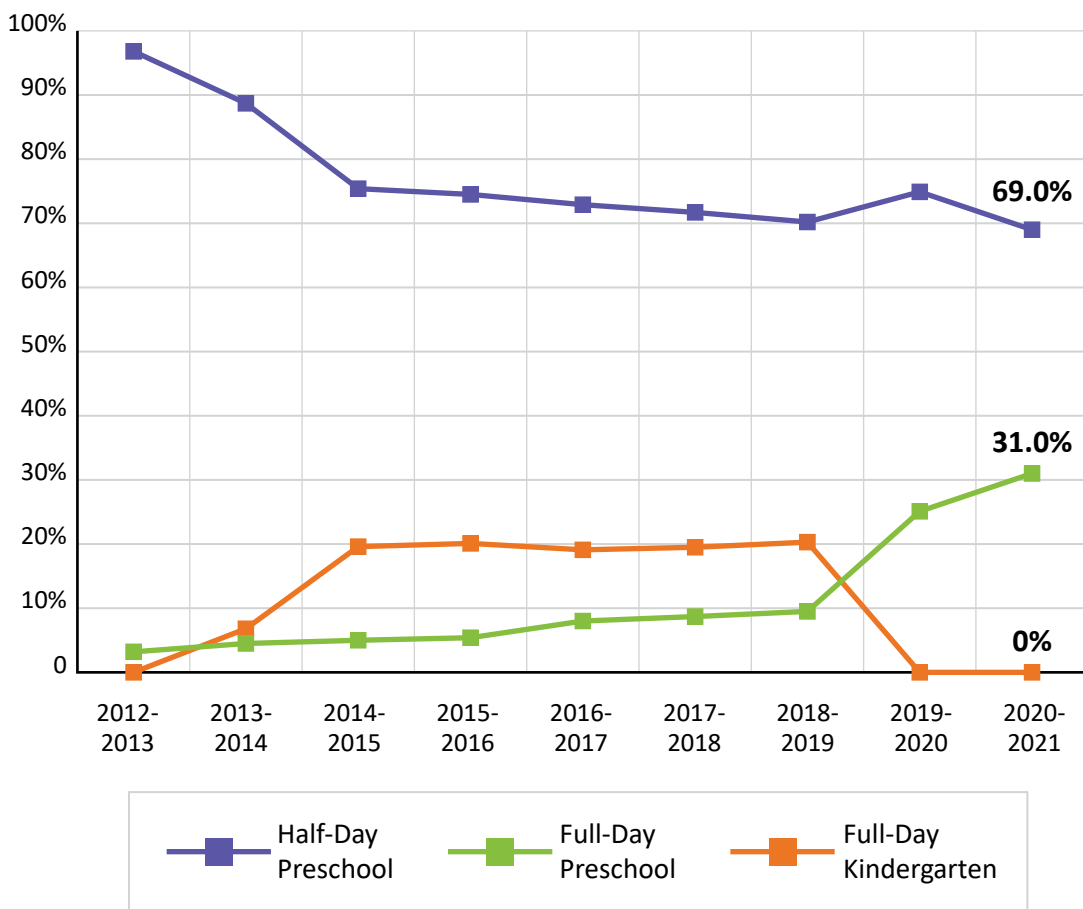
Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of CPP Enrollment, by Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Kindergarten through 12th Grade Enrollment, by Race/Ethnicity Statewide, Limited to Students Eligible for Free- and Reduced-Priced Lunch
Hispanic or Latino	48.7%	55.9%
White	34.6%	28.7%
Black	9.0%	7.7%
Two or More Races	3.8%	3.9%
Asian	2.9%	2.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	.7%	1.0%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.2%	.4%



Enrollment by Length of Day

Children currently enrolled in CPP receive funding for either half-day or full-day preschool. As mentioned earlier and noted in Figure 4, the percentage of children served in full-day preschool grew substantially in 2019-20 due to the implementation of funding for full-day kindergarten and the diversion of the ECARE positions to preschool. This partially explains the increase in children receiving funding for full-day preschool in the past two years. In the 2018-19 school year, 9.5 percent of children received full-day funding. This increased to 25.1 percent in the 2019-20 school year, and rose again to 31 percent in the 2020-21 school year.

Figure 8: Enrollment by Length of Day



This rise in the utilization of full-day positions illustrates the demand for full-day programming options for families. Districts report that some preschool services were declined because of family need for full-time programming. Full-time programming options not only benefit families, but also the child, as it increases continuity of care and access to service and instructional time for children who may benefit most from preschool experiences.

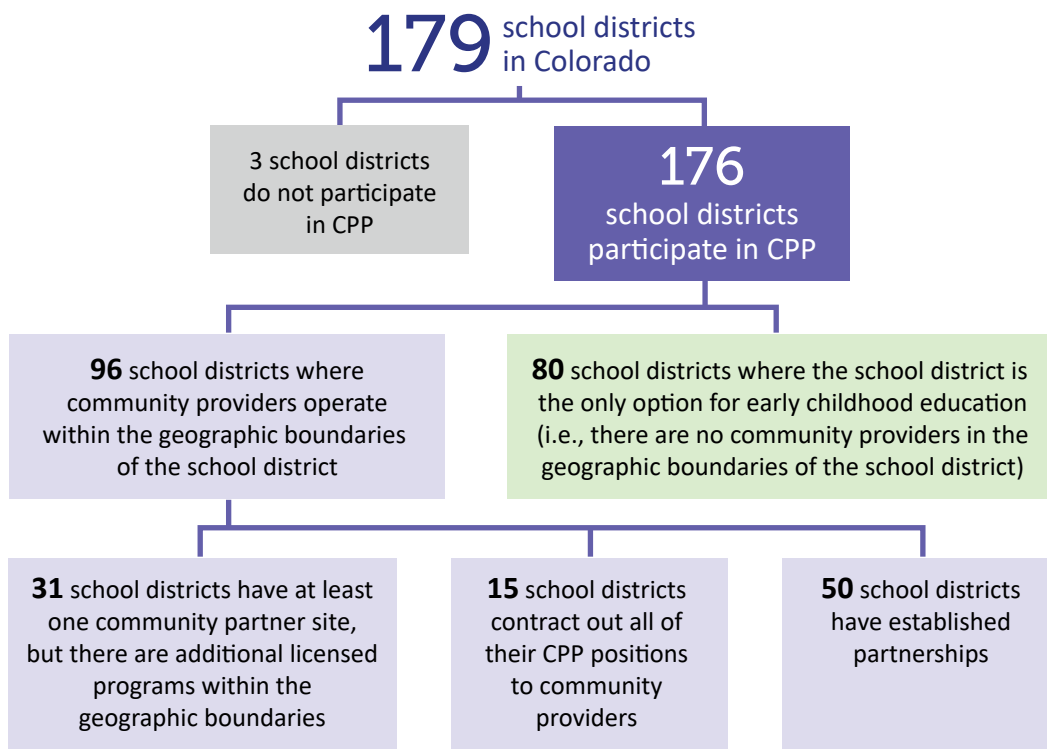


Enrollment by Setting

CPP serves children across the state by supporting partnerships between local school districts and their community providers. While public schools are the most common preschool setting throughout Colorado for CPP, state statute requires that each district identify and consider options for contracting positions out to community providers within their geographic boundaries. When available, partnering between school districts and community providers reflects the mutual desire on behalf of both parties to support a system of quality early learning experiences for preschool-aged children. The inclusion of community providers and Head Start program options in the provision of CPP services supports families' access to high quality preschool programs and resources in many communities. Program requirements, CPP requirements, and other considerations play into the availability and success of these relationships. In some cases, there are insufficient community provider options, or community providers do not have the capacity or interest to participate in the larger network in this way.

Figure 9 illustrates the relationships between school districts and other providers in the mixed delivery of CPP. Over 80 percent of districts have established mixed delivery within the current community capacity and program structures, which includes districts that deliver all programming through one or more contracts to community providers. As shown below, 17.6 percent of districts that participate in CPP have an opportunity to increase partnerships with community providers. These districts do not have extensive, established relationships with community providers in their area.

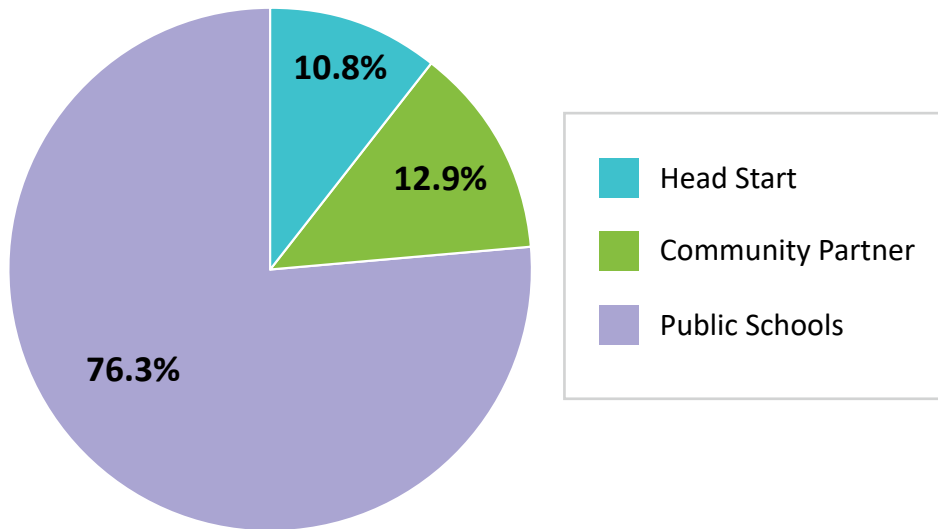
Figure 9: CPP Community Provider Partnerships with School Districts





There was very little change in enrollment by setting from 2019-20 to 2020-21. Public schools remain the largest provider, serving 76.3 percent of children in CPP. That was followed by 12.9 percent of children served by community providers, and 10.8 percent served in Head Start programs as illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10: CPP/ECARE Enrollment by Setting in 2020-21



In the 2020-21 school year, 830 programs served children funded through CPP. On average, each facility served 23 children funded through CPP.





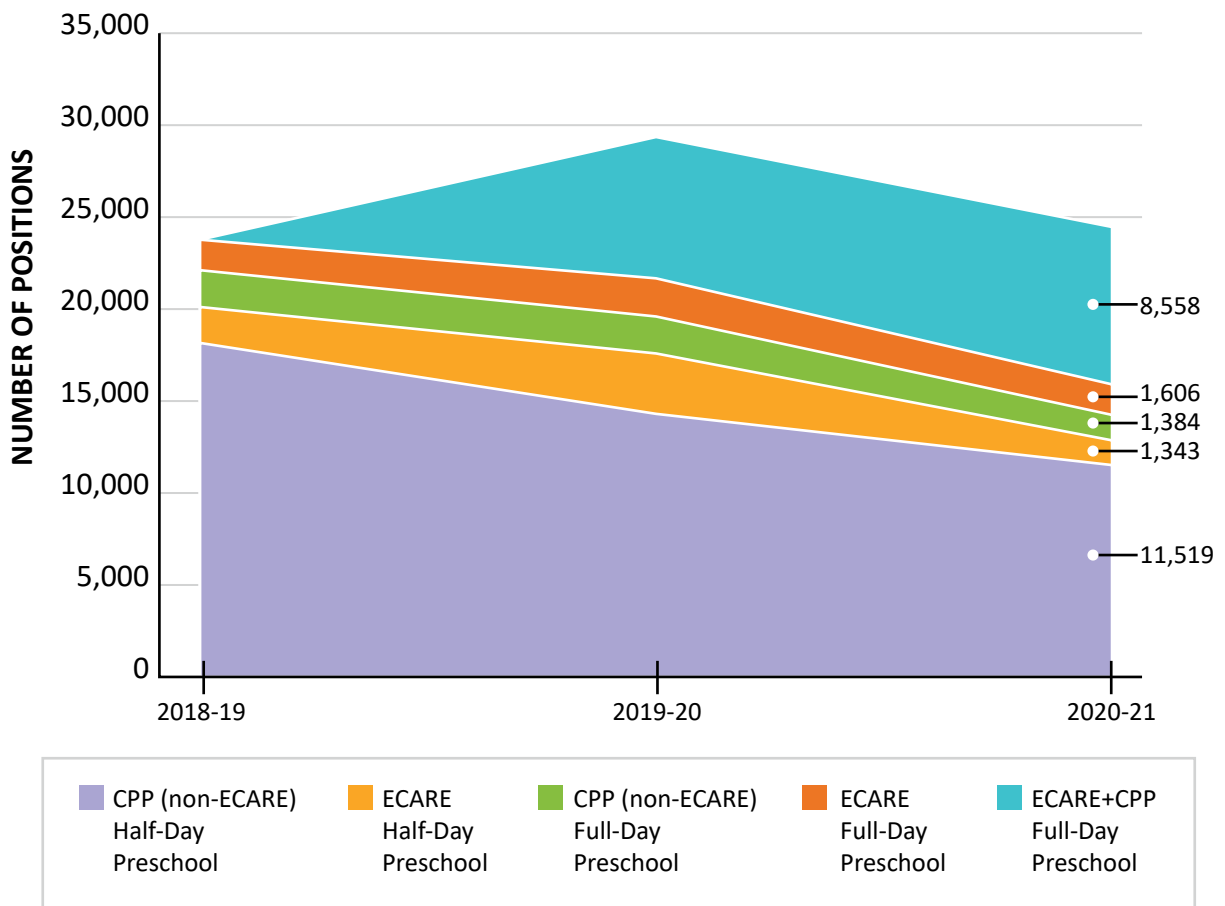
Enrollment by Position Type

ECARE Positions

Districts participating in the Colorado Preschool Program can use CPP and ECARE positions to fund half-day positions for preschool. As mentioned earlier, ECARE positions are a more flexible type of position and may be used with another CPP or ECARE position to fund a full preschool day of programming.

Prior to the 2019-20 school year, the majority of the ECARE positions were utilized to fund full-day kindergarten. However, once implementation of full-day kindergarten began, districts made use of those ECARE positions by diverting them to preschool.⁹ Figure 11 highlights this diversion and the effect on full-day programming. Similar to the traditional CPP positions, programs using ECARE positions must meet all the same requirements noted for the traditional CPP positions.

Figure 11: Traditional CPP versus ECARE Positions from 2018-19 to 2020-21

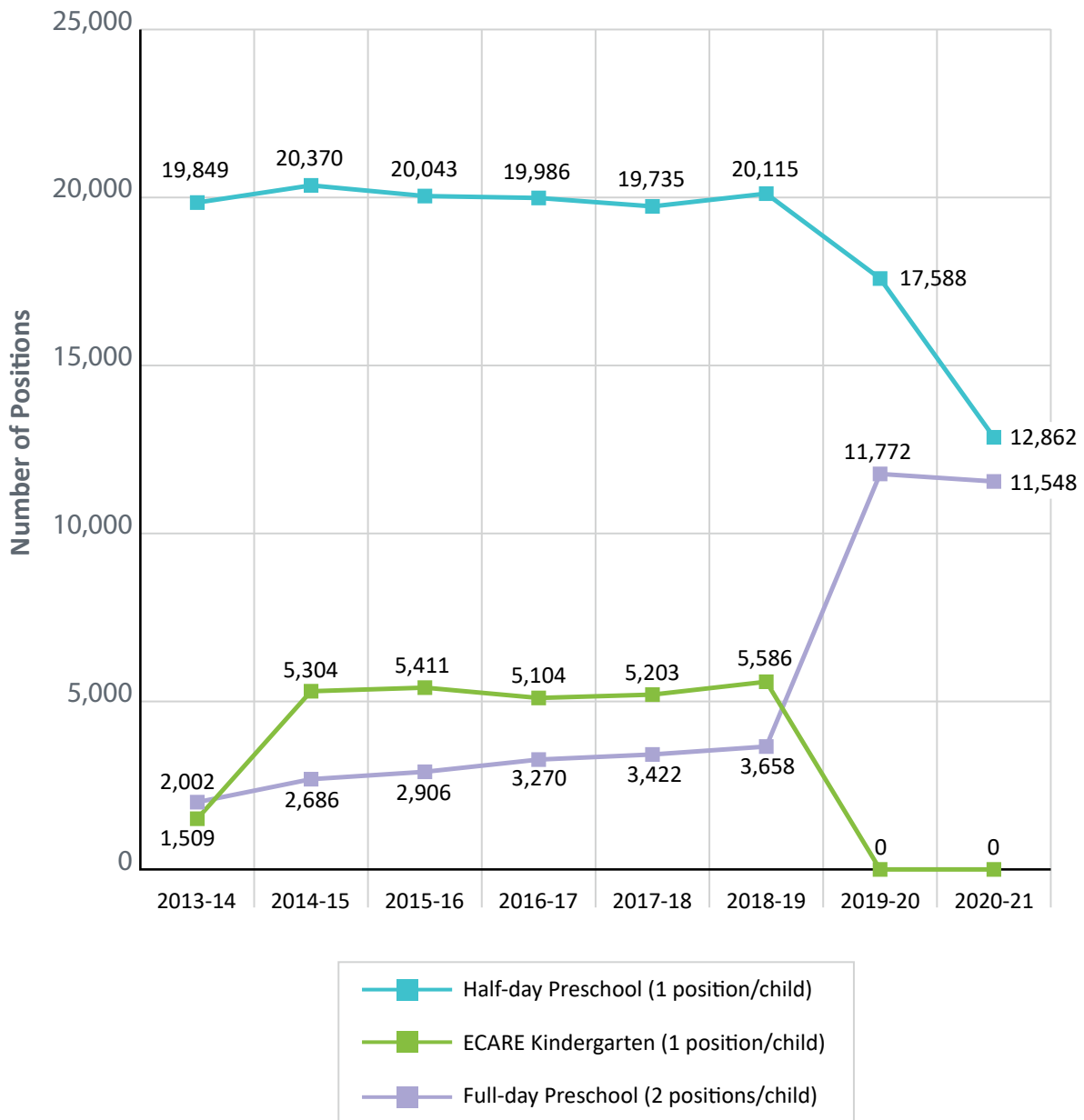


⁹ HB 19-1262



Figure 12 demonstrates the increase in full-day programming over time and also highlights that the 2020-21 school year maintained the number of positions for full-day preschool, despite the decline in overall CPP enrollment as a result of COVID-19.

Figure 12: Half-Day, Full-Day, and Kindergarten ECARE Position Use

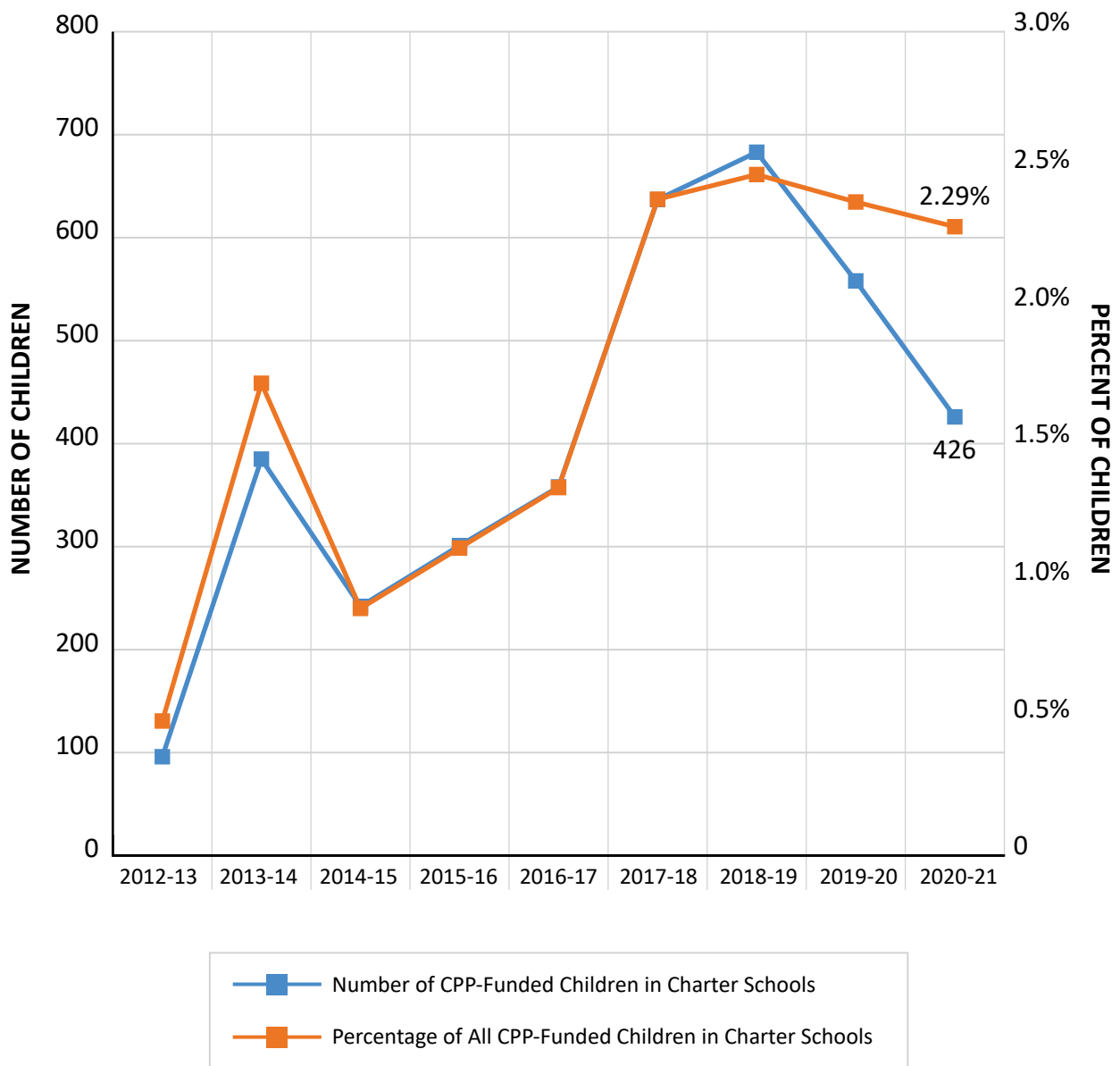




Charter School Participation in CPP

Charter schools continue to serve less than 3 percent of children funded through CPP. CPP-funded children enrolled in a charter school setting dropped from 558 students in 2019-20 to 426 students in 2020-21. This drop in enrollment is due to the impact of COVID-19, and reflects the drop in preschool enrollment across the state.

Figure 13: Number and Percentage of Charter School Participation in CPP from 2012-13 to 2020-21



Colorado Shines and CPP

High Quality Preschool and the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System

The intention of CPP is to provide high quality preschool for children who are at risk for later academic challenges.



**COLORADO
SHINES**

**START EARLY
START STRONG
QUALITY EARLY LEARNING**



“

The district advisory council used walkthrough data, Ts Gold data, and data from teacher feedback to monitor quality in the classrooms as well as drive the professional development focuses for the following school year. The district advisory council also looked at the differences between our Level 5 classroom and our Level 2 classrooms to identify the resources, ideas, strategies and appropriate activities that are needed to create a Level 5 program. The same resources in the Level 5 classroom are available to all classrooms in our program and can be accessed at any time, by any teacher to create their high quality learning environments.

Weld County RE-1 School District

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All preschool programs in Colorado must be licensed through the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). The state’s licensure system, Colorado Shines, blends a compliance system with a robust quality rating system. Colorado Shines consists of five levels, ranging from a Level 1 rating to the highest quality rating of a Level 5. At minimum, a Level 1 rating is required for programs serving children funded through CPP, as this demonstrates that a program is currently licensed with the state of Colorado and meets basic health and safety regulations.

To determine the level of quality of early care and education programs, Colorado Shines evaluates how each organization:



Each program can choose the pace at which it advances through the ratings. District-operated programs may achieve higher quality ratings through an alternative pathway option that streamlines the quality rating process to better support district participation.

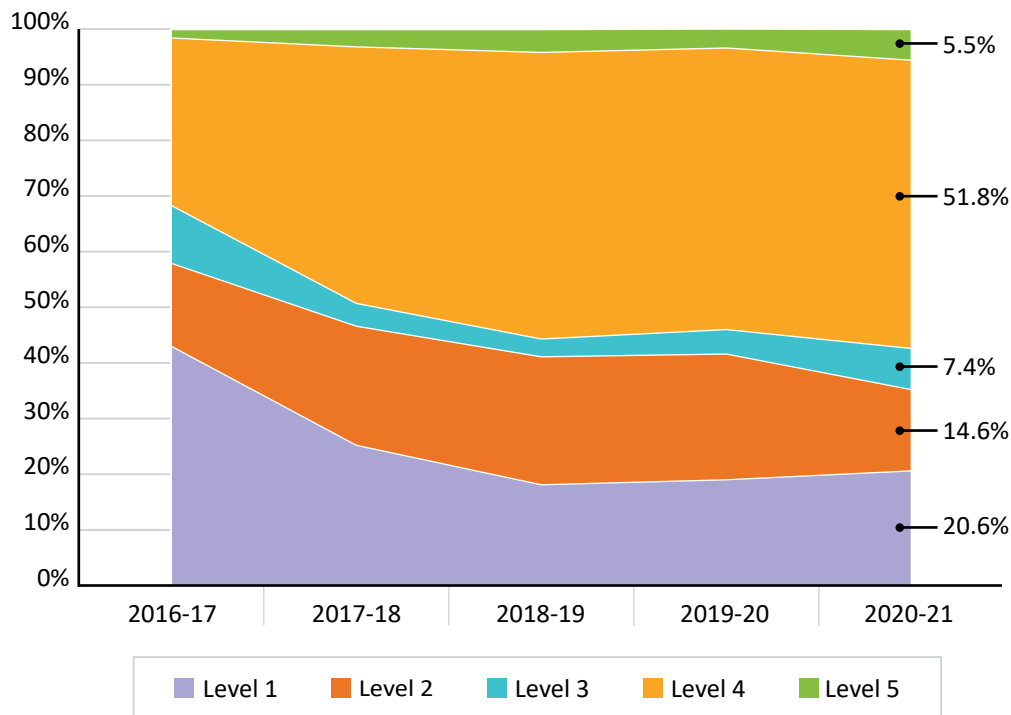
With this option, districts have the ability to submit documentation for all buildings where preschool programs operate, including quality assurances that meet Colorado Shines criteria. This streamlined approach saves district-operated programs time and resources by eliminating their need to apply and submit documentation independently. Programs approved this way are eligible for at least a Level 3 rating.





Programs with a Colorado Shines rating of Level 3 through 5 are considered to be high quality programs. The proportion of children funded through CPP enrolled in these high quality programs has increased steadily since the 2016-17 school year, a trend illustrated in Figure 14. In 2016-17, 42.1 percent of children were enrolled in a program with a Level 3 rating or higher. That percentage increased to 64.8 percent in 2020-21.

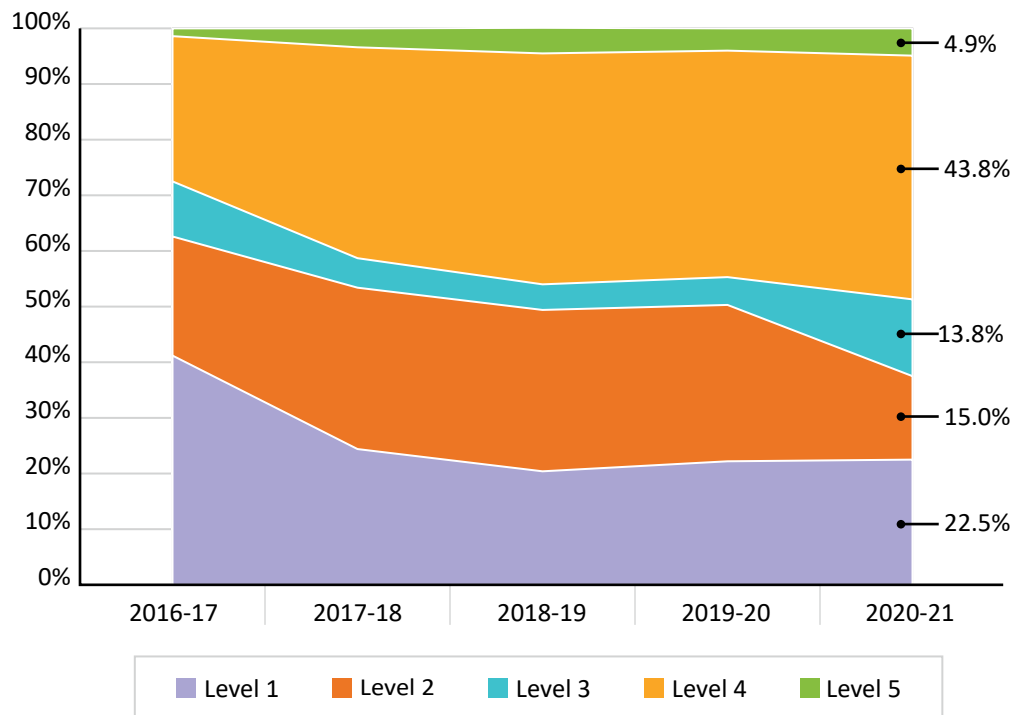
Figure 14: Percentage of Children in CPP among Colorado Shines-rated Programs from 2016 to 2021





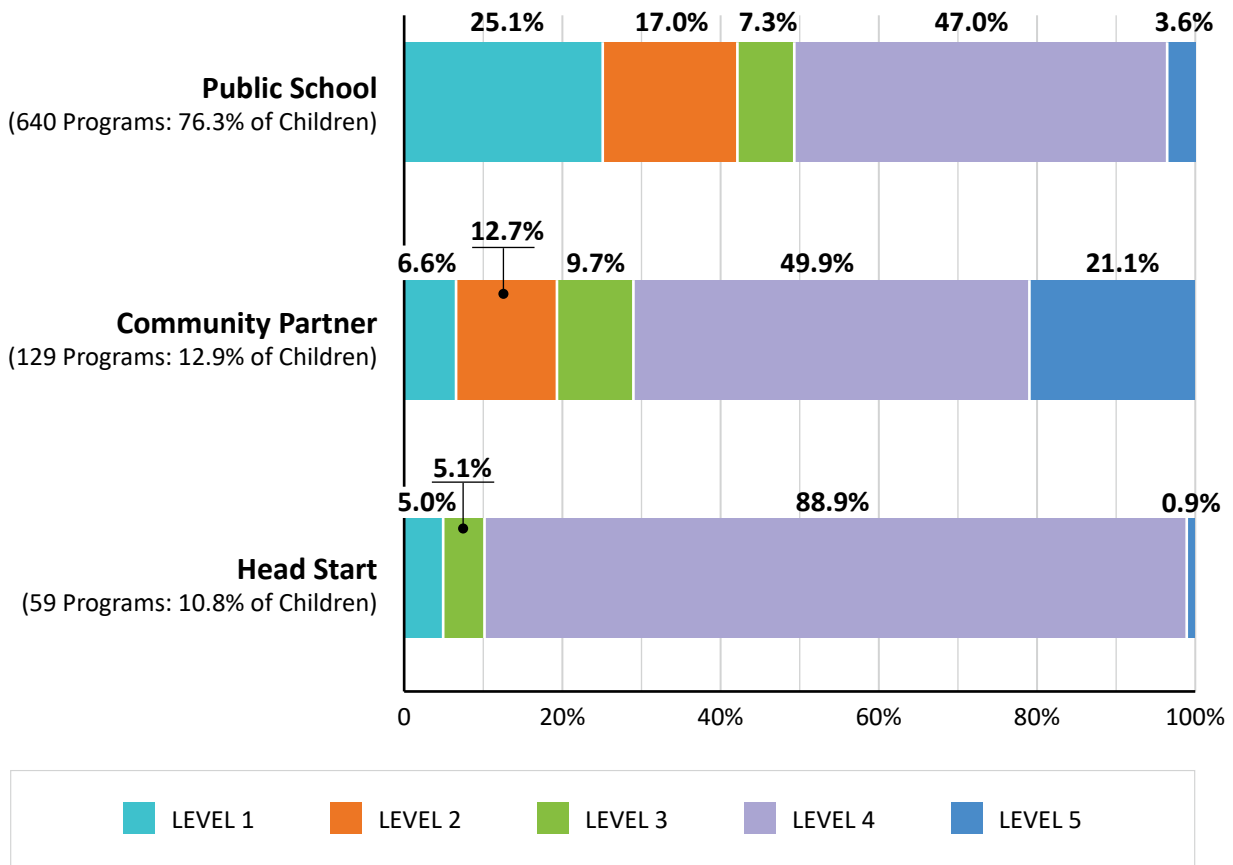
Similarly, the proportion of programs participating in CPP with a Level 3 rating or higher has also grown steadily over the years. In 2016-17, 37.4 percent of programs serving CPP children received a Shines rating of Level 3 or greater. That percentage has increased to 62.5 percent in 2020-21 (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Percentage of CPP Programs among Colorado Shines Ratings from 2016 to 2021



In the public school setting, the largest proportion of children were served in programs with a Level 4 rating (47 percent), followed by Level 1 (25.1 percent), Level 2 (17 percent), Level 3 (7.3 percent), and Level 5 (3.6 percent). For community partner programs, the largest proportion of children were also served in programs with a Level 4 rating (49.9 percent), followed by Level 5 (21.1 percent), Level 2 (12.7 percent), Level 3 (9.7 percent), and, finally, Level 1 (6.6 percent). The majority of CPP children enrolled in Head Start were served in programs with a Level 4 rating (88.9 percent), then Level 3 (5.1 percent), Level 1 (5 percent), and Level 5 (0.9 percent). Head Start did not serve any CPP children in programs with a Level 2 rating. Figure 16 shows the proportion of children served by program setting for each rating.

Figure 16: Proportion of Children Served at the Colorado Shines Rating Levels by Program Setting¹⁰ in 2020-2021

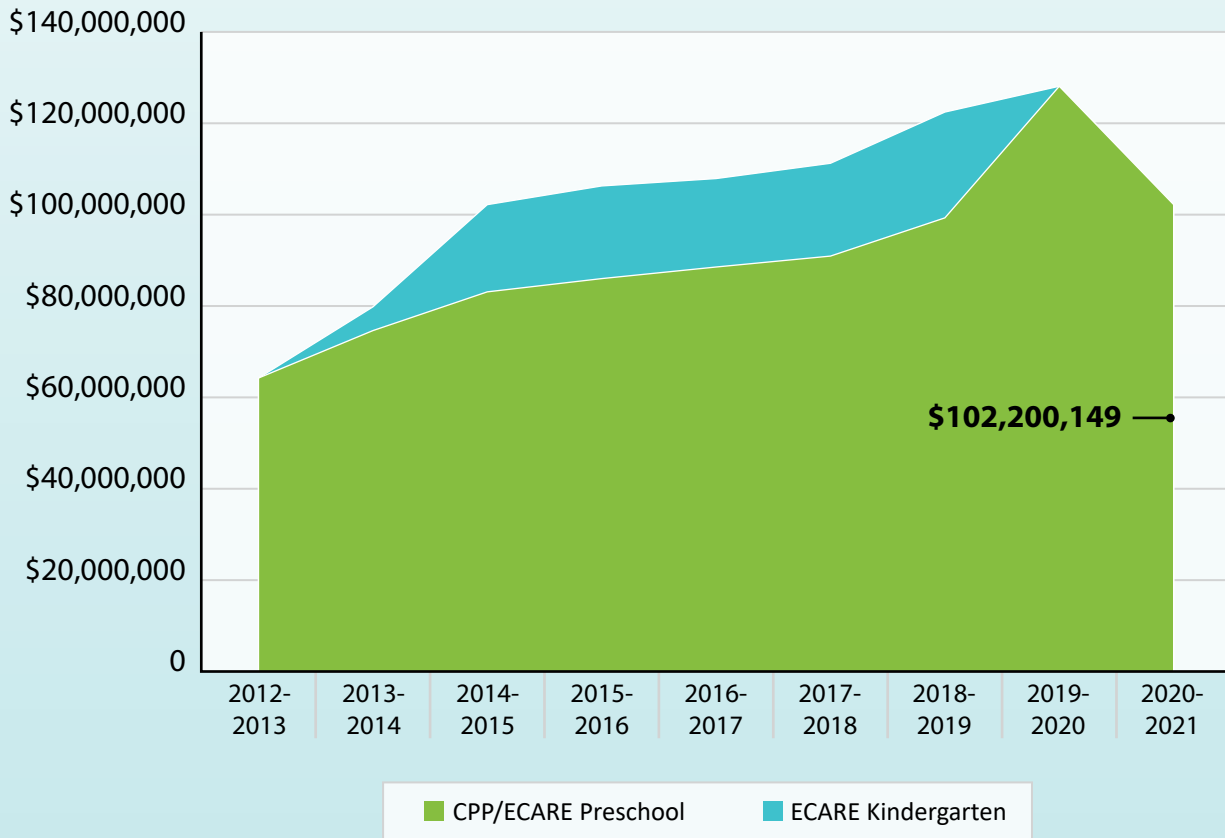


¹⁰ Head Start programs in good standing with the Office of Head Start are automatically eligible for a Level 4 rating without participating in the full rating process.

Funding for CPP

Total funding for CPP in the 2020-21 school year reached \$102,200,149 -- a 20 percent decrease from the 2019-20 school year (\$128,107,396) due to lower CPP enrollment and lower average funding per preschool position from the state. The average state funding for the 2020-21 school year was calculated to be \$5,484.02 per child funded through CPP, or \$4,187 per position. Figure 17 illustrates these trends.

Figure 17: Total CPP Program Funding¹¹

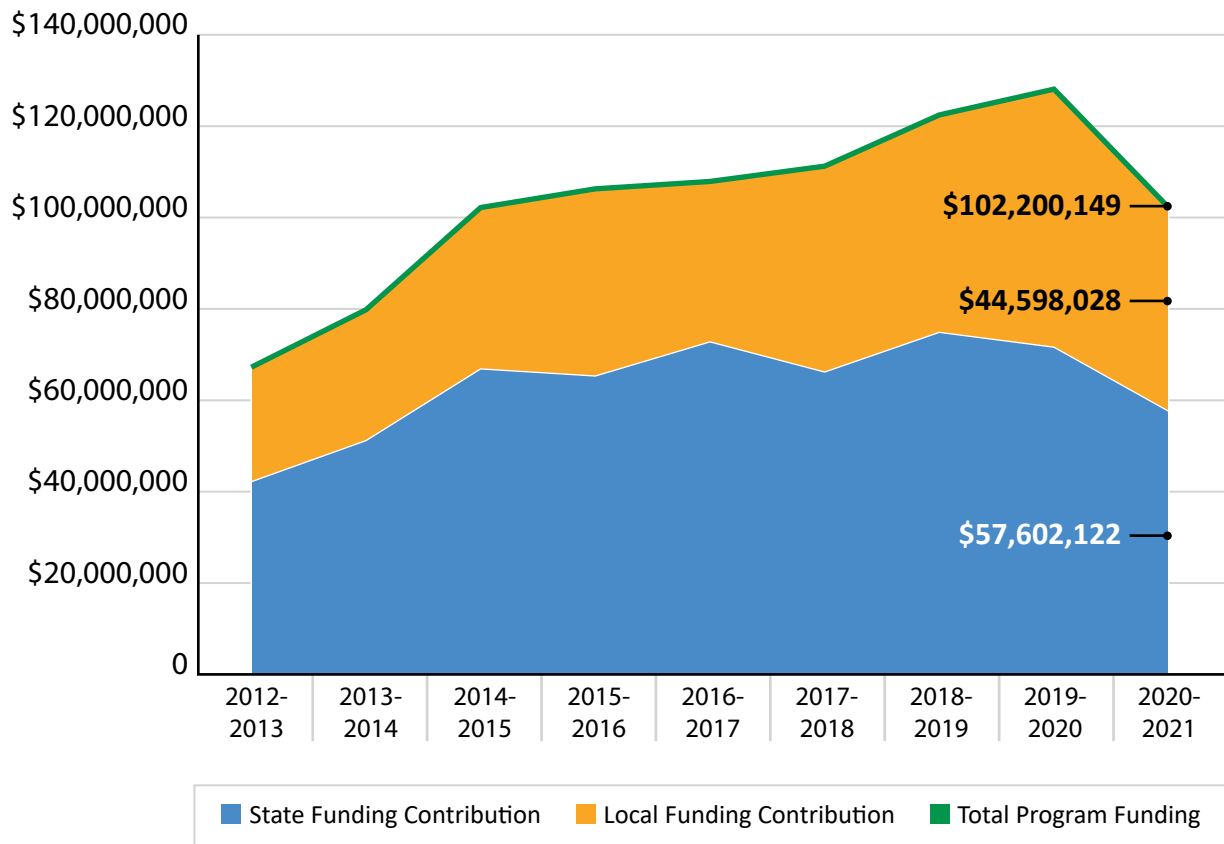


¹¹ Senate Bill 21-053 provided Mitigation Funding to 53 school districts that met a legislatively defined drop in state funding during the 2020-21 school year. Legislation allowed the funding to be spent at the districts' discretion. The 2020-21 Mitigation Funding is excluded from the financial calculations in this report, as itemized Mitigation Funding expenditures are not currently available, however, preschool is an allowable expense for those funds.



Both the state and local school districts contribute funding to CPP. In the 2020-21 school year, the state contributed \$57,602,122 to CPP, which comprised 56.4 percent of total funding. Local sources contributed \$44,598,028 to the program, which comprised 43.6 percent of total funding. The local sources of funding come from property taxes and specific ownership taxes, such as vehicle registration. Figure 18 displays these data.

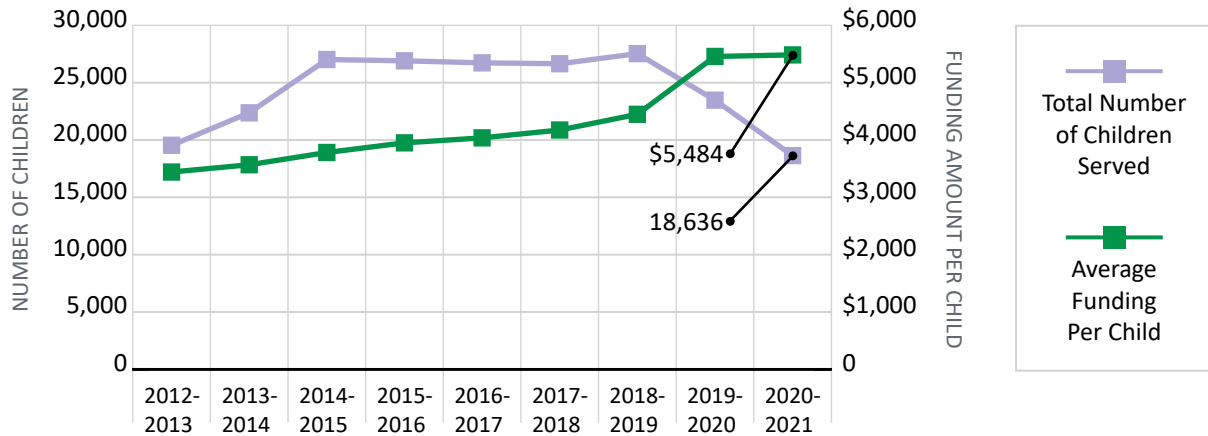
Figure 18: State and Local Contributions to Total Program Funding for CPP from 2012 to 2021





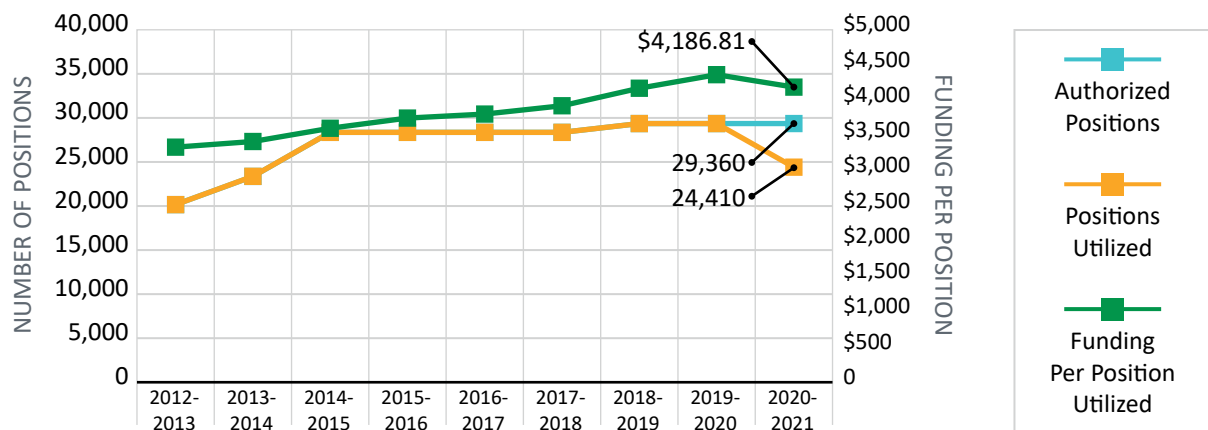
While the number of children enrolled in CPP decreased in the 2020-21 school year, the funding per child rose slightly. Funding per child grew from \$5,457 in 2019-20 to \$5,484 in 2020-21. This trend is due to an increasing proportion of children being served by full-day preschool.

Figure 19: Number of Children in CPP and Funding per Child from 2012 to 2021



The annual number of positions authorized, positions used, and the average funding per position grew steadily from 2012-13 through 2019-20. The 2020-21 school year saw a drop in the number of positions utilized and the average funding per position. Many districts in the state experienced a reduction in their per pupil funding amount for students in the 2020-21 school year. Additionally, many families chose not to enroll their children in the Colorado Preschool Program due to concerns related to the pandemic.

Figure 20: Number of Authorized Positions, Positions Used, and Average Funding Per Position from 2012 to 2021



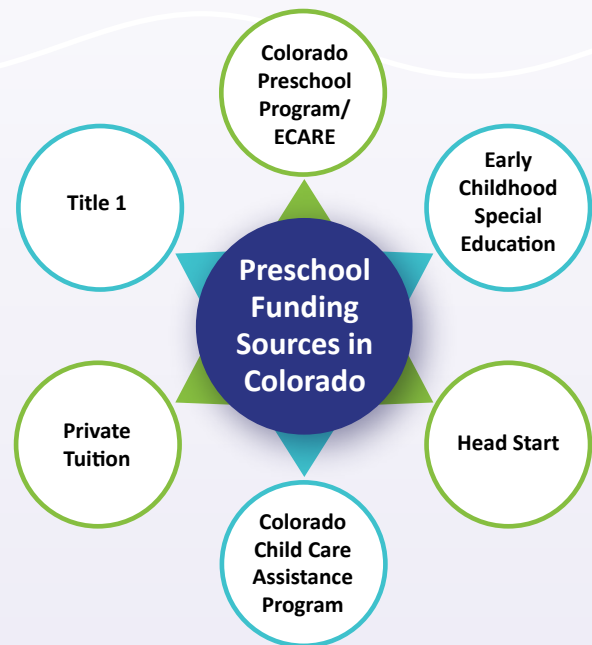
Preschool Funding Sources in Colorado

In order to meet families' needs, districts typically must consider all available preschool funding sources, access them, and blend or braid them together, as possible, to fund their programs. Funding sources include public funds from state and federal sources as well as family-paid tuition. Head Start, Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), Title I, state and local general education funds, and early childhood special education funding (including Exceptional Children's Education Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B and Section 619 funding) are all examples and possible sources of funding.

Combining multiple early childhood funding sources allows programs to:

- Increase parental choice by adding full-day and/or extended-day, and/or year round options to meet family needs
- Increase quality by employing early childhood educators who hold CDE teacher licenses and paying them on parity with K-12 educators
- Provide increased professional development and coursework opportunities for early childhood staff.

CDE encourages districts to follow best practices by serving preschoolers in blended classrooms. Blended classrooms, or classrooms that serve children from diverse backgrounds and from multiple funding sources in the same setting, allow for higher rates of inclusion and improve the quality of early childhood environments. A chart with more information on the various funding sources used in programs can be found at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/ecefundinginco>.



Expanding CPP to Children with Educational Disabilities

Children with disabilities benefit from inclusive preschool programs that are designed to meet their learning needs.¹² To better support children with disabilities, districts can combine a half-day of CPP funding (one position) with a half-day of preschool special education funding.

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All preschool students including those with disabilities are included in daily activities and routines. The specialized service personnel work to guide the students and staff to ensure inclusion and guidance in supporting children with disabilities... Involving all students in the activities worked well for the entire class. Students with disabilities and students without disabilities are put on learning teams or in pairs to encourage inclusion, understanding and friendship. This has proven to be valuable as friendships are born and students demonstrate excitement for each other's accomplishments and successes.

McClave School District

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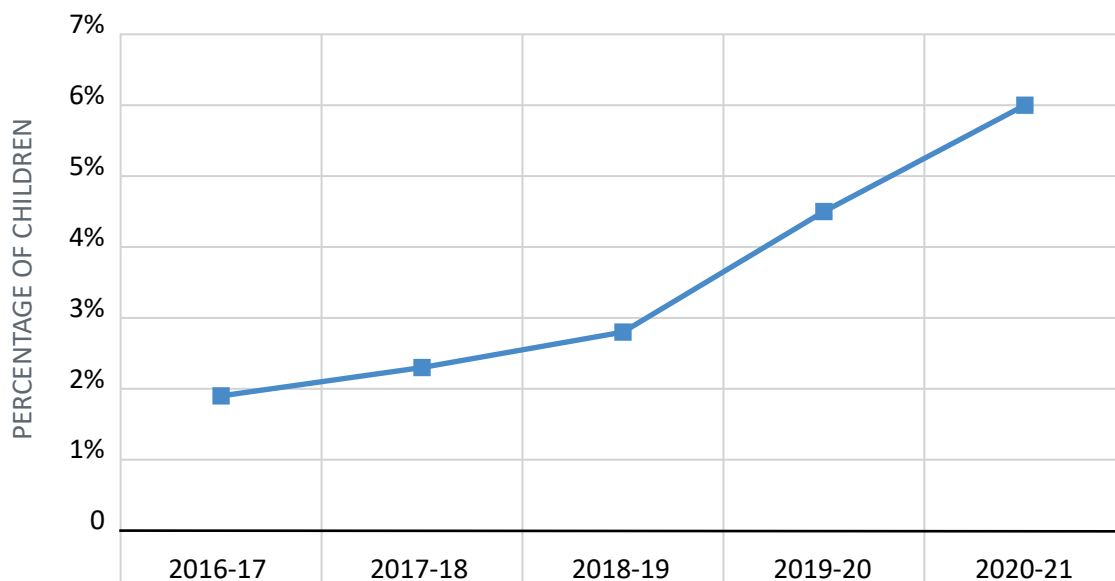
¹² C.R.S. § 22-28-106(a)(1)(IV) and 1 CCR 301-32 2228-R 5.08



The proportion of children using this combination of funding has grown steadily over the years, almost tripling from about 2 percent in 2016-17 to 6 percent in the 2020-21 school year. However, when looking more specifically at preschoolers with individualized education programs (IEPs), out of 7,413 preschoolers with an IEP reported in the fall pupil count, 1,112 preschoolers also received part-day CPP funds in addition to half-day preschool funding as a student enrolled in special education. This represents 15 percent of the population of preschoolers with IEPs.



Figure 21: Percentage of All Children in CPP Who Also Received State Per-Pupil Funding for Preschool Special Education for Full-day Programming from 2016 to 2021



¹³ C.R.S. § 22-28-106(a)(1)(IV) and 1 CCR 301-32 2228-R 5.08

Children's Growth

During the 2020-21 School Year

The Results Matter Assessment System

The Results Matter assessment system is designed to measure and improve child outcomes and serves as an accountability mechanism for the program. Any program serving state funded preschoolers is required to participate in Results Matter.

Results Matter data, often in combination with other data, are utilized by teachers, administrators, and policy makers for various purposes. Some of those purposes are listed below:

Planning instruction, both individual and class-wide

Planning classroom and program-wide improvement strategies

Communicating, partnering, and engaging with families

Allocating resources at a program-level

Accountability reporting and program evaluation

Results Matter uses authentic assessments to support the use of data-based decision making for teachers, administrators, families, and policy makers and to improve child outcomes. Authentic, formative assessment allows for teachers to measure progress, individualize instruction, and monitor growth throughout the school year. Data from these assessments also inform program evaluation and improvement efforts for both administrators and policymakers.

Authentic assessment means that children are observed in their everyday learning environments and progress is noted in key areas of learning and development through the course of everyday routines and activities. By reviewing children's work samples, observing them at play with peers, and connecting with families, teachers gather a unique, detailed view of each child that supports individualized instruction in the classroom and better outcomes for students.





While the assessments used by Results Matter are formative, they can be used to provide summative information allowing programs to see the overall picture of how children are performing in relation to widely held expectations of child development over the course of the school year.

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The daily routine includes core curricular instruction provided through a developmentally appropriate, play-based environment, as well as integrated services provided in alignment with ongoing formative assessment and differentiated instruction targeting each child's specific level of skill attainment to ensure continued growth for all. Related service providers most frequently "push-in" to these classrooms and provide services and instruction that is aligned with the overall unit of study. The goal is to enable integrated and aligned instruction from all providers that empowers common learning targets, ongoing collaboration and communication, and seamless learning opportunities for children.

Fountain 8 School District

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We start by creating and analyzing each child's individualized learning plan (ILP) to guide us in our instruction. We use the information gathered and implement Teaching Strategies into our everyday instruction based on the student's needs. Since we are a smaller district we have the opportunity to get to know the kids and families and gain insight into their needs as well. We also implement Colorado state standards and TS GOLD benchmarks to guide us in our instruction. We focus on the areas of concern and build on the areas that we feel are the most important for each individual child and for the easiest transition into Kindergarten.

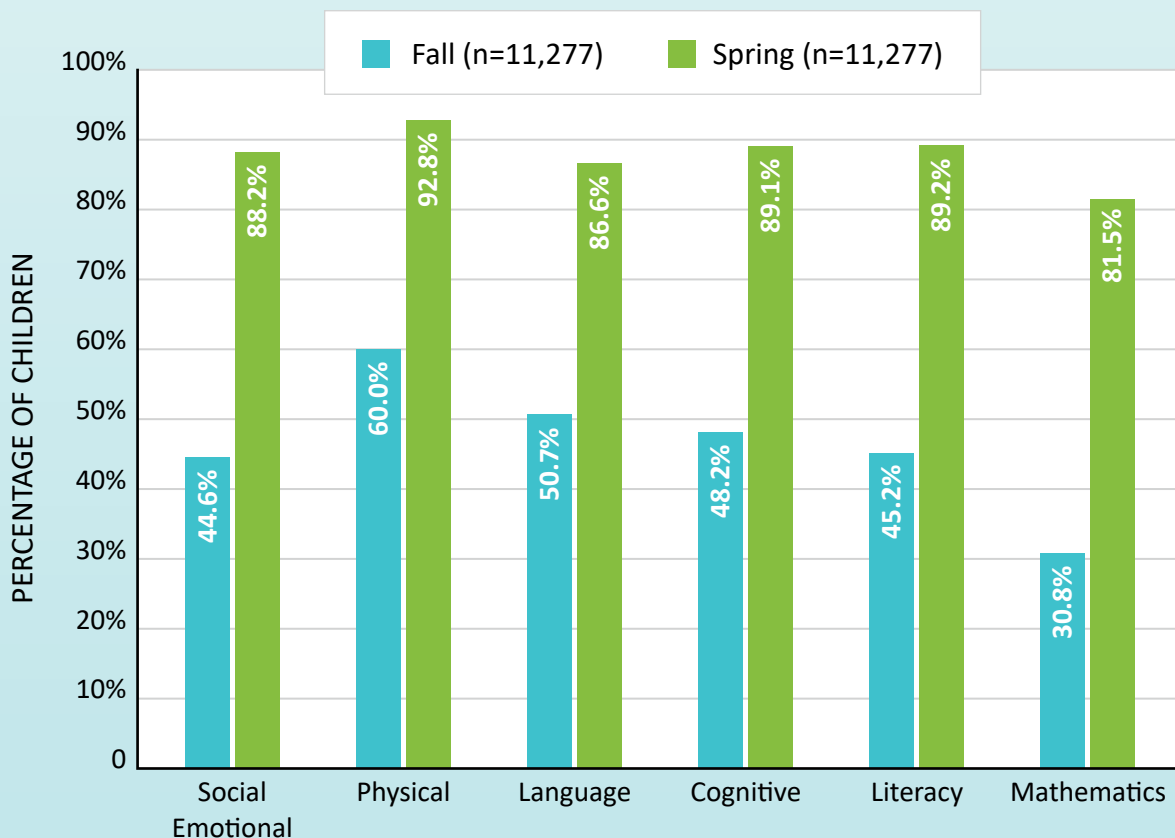
Arriba-Flagler C-20 School District

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2020-21 CPP Results

Results displayed in Figure 22 demonstrate the growth from the fall to spring checkpoints for 4-year-old children funded by CPP in the six measured domains: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and mathematics. Despite the operational challenges for preschool programs throughout the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, children made substantial overall gains in learning and development between the fall and spring checkpoints. Nearly 90% of children either met or exceeded the age expectations across these two checkpoints in all domains except language and mathematics.¹³ While relatively fewer children met or exceeded age expectations in mathematics, the percentage point increase was highest in math (50.8 percentage points) compared to other areas. The percentage point increase from the fall to spring checkpoints ranged from 32.8 points (physical development) to 50.8 points (mathematics). This trend remained consistent between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years.

Figure 22: Percentage of 4-Year-Old Children in CPP Meeting or Exceeding Age Expectations 2020-21



¹³ Approximately 582 4-year-old children in CPP were assessed using HighScope COR Advantage, a second assessment system that has been approved for use for Results Matter. Those results are not reported here.

Long-Term Outcomes for Students Served by CPP

Positive outcomes for children who participated in CPP are seen not only in the growth within their preschool year, but also in grade retention in later years, state assessment results in later years, and on-time graduation rates when compared to similarly at-risk peers.

Key Findings:



As in years past, rates of retention in the early elementary grades (K-3) are lower for students who participated in CPP compared to students with similar risk factors who did not receive CPP programming.



Students who participated in CPP are more likely to graduate on time than children who did not participate in CPP with similar risk factors. Further, any length of time spent in a high quality early learning environment proved beneficial for on-time graduation.



Grade Retention Results

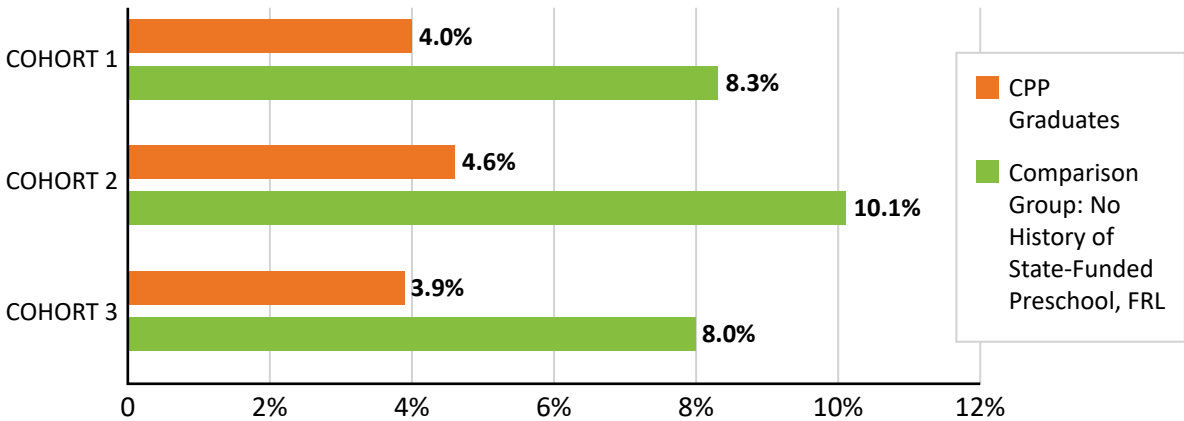
Although a serious consideration, grade retention is one of several interventions that a school can use to support a child’s trajectory of learning. Supporting children who repeat a grade increases the costs associated with funding public school. While high-quality preschool requires a significant investment, it generally costs less than retention and is associated with improved outcomes. The data below suggest a return on investment in CPP.

Grade Retention Outcomes for CPP

Figures 23 and 24 show two different views of retention information. Figure 23 shows the overall proportion of children who were retained at any point in grades K-3 over the past three years (i.e., cumulative retention rate),¹⁴ whereas Figure 24 breaks retention data down further, providing the rates by grade level.

Both figures present grade-level progression rates for children in three different cohorts. The first cohort received CPP funding in 2013-14, and assuming a normal grade progression, reached third grade by 2017-18. Children in Cohort 2 received CPP funding in 2014-15 and advanced to third grade in 2018-19, and children in Cohort 3 received CPP funding in 2015-16 and advanced to third grade in 2019-20. Rates were compared to a comparison group of students that had no history of publicly funded preschool and were eligible for FRL in first grade. This analysis lags by one year, as the intention is to measure rates of retention through third grade. Consequently, in order to meet that goal, the additional year is needed to ensure that the student reaches fourth grade within the typical timeframe.

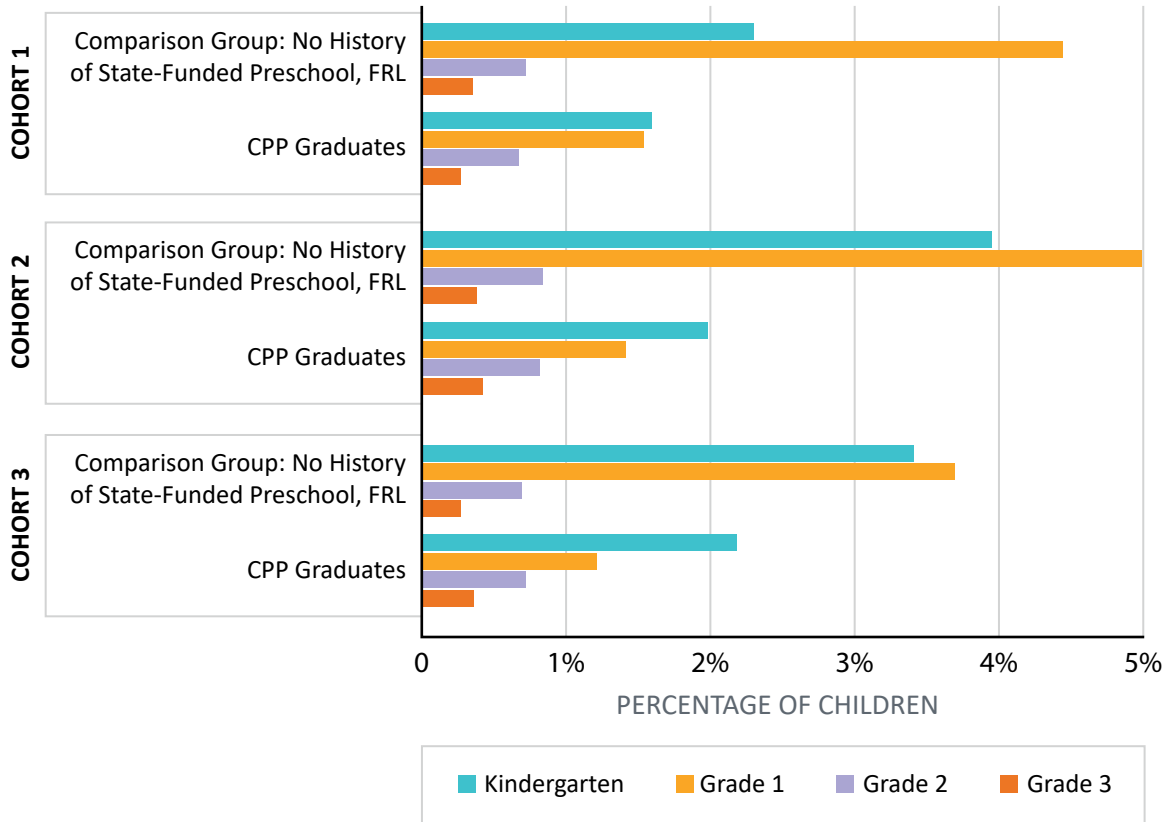
Figure 23: Cumulative Retention Rates: Kindergarten through Third Grade



¹⁴ See longitudinal data appendix for cohort and comparison group descriptions.



Figure 24: Percentage of Students Who Were Retained by Grade



Key findings:



Cohort 2 saw a slight increase in retention; however, Cohort 3 rates of retention are much closer to those from Cohort 1, which had been captured two years previous.



Across all cohorts, retention rates are highest in first grade for children with no history of state-funded preschool but lower for CPP graduates.



These rates have remained steady over time.

On-Time Graduation Results

Positive outcomes are also seen at graduation. When looking at the rates of on-time graduation for the 2019-20 graduating cohort, students who received full-day CPP funding the year before kindergarten had the highest four-year graduation rate (77.2 percent) in comparison to students who received half-day CPP funding (76.8 percent) as well as students who received no CPP funding but were FRL eligible (57.2 percent). This may suggest a greater long-term impact for students who received part- or full-day funding. However, caution should be used when interpreting these percentages, as these rates do not control for any additional demographic characteristics, like gender, race and ethnicity and disability status, nor any preschool services that may have been provided in a private, non-state funded setting.

Table 2: Comparison of On-Time Graduation Rates, 2019-20

Subgroup of Graduating Class	Rate of On-Time Graduation
Students who did not receive CPP funding, but were FRL eligible	57.2%
Students who received half-day CPP funding the year before kindergarten	76.8%
Students who received full-day CPP funding the year before kindergarten	77.2%



The Vital Role of Family Engagement

CDE recognizes the importance of family engagement in every child's education. Parents and guardians of children funded through CPP discuss expectations about their roles in their children's educational program and commit to partner with their providers.¹⁵ Programs serving children in the CPP actively engage their preschool families, using strategies like parent conferences and two-way communication that strengthen the connection between home and school. Many districts report using these high-impact family engagement strategies, which meet or exceed CPP program expectations.

Many districts reported modifying their engagement strategies due to pandemic safety restrictions. Home visits, conferences, and classes that may have been held in-person previously were required to be held virtually in the 2020-21 school year. However, these innovations proved to be an unanticipated benefit of implementing pandemic-related safety strategies as these strategies continued to bolster family partnerships and engagement.

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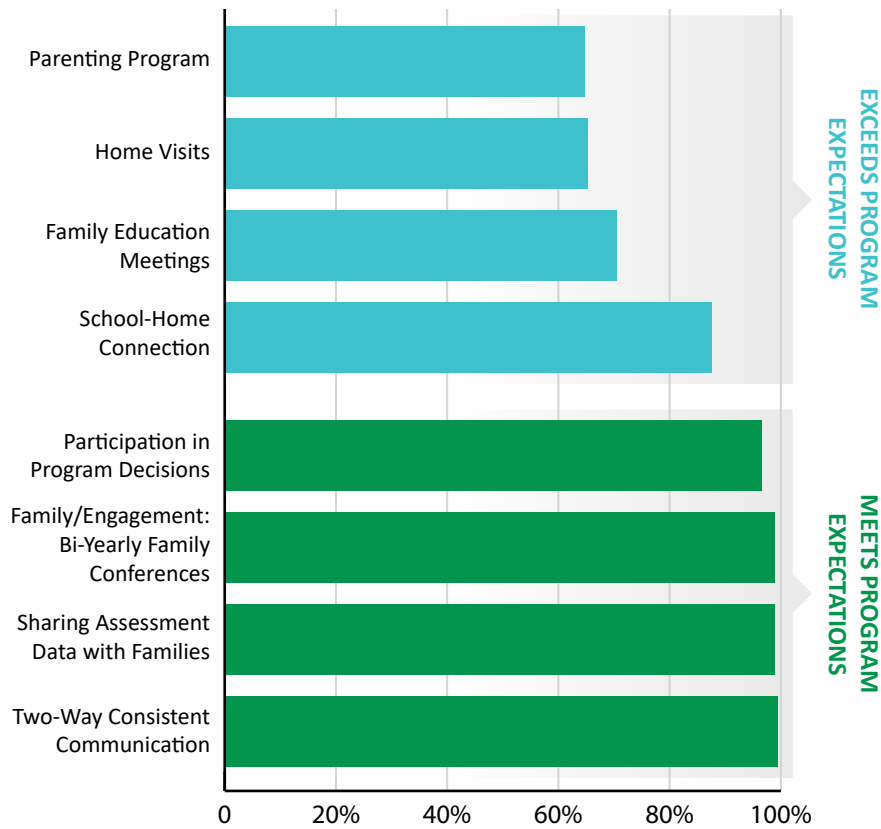
Like everyone, our sites were forced to learn new ways to communicate effectively with our parents and families. We found that overall, there were many benefits: teachers were able to greet children daily in cars to screen them, this gave opportunities to talk with parents more routinely. It built genuine caring amongst teachers and families. Common communication was built around how children are feeling physically and emotionally, with a true concern from both parties. Teachers developed more empathy by seeing struggles of families on daily bases. When zooming, teachers and staff became aware of the vulnerability of our families when seeing first-hand some of their living conditions. In a sense, we were closer to our families because of the common ground -- we are all in this together and doing our best. Although all of the in-person events were cancelled this year, we did see a fairly good turn out for our online events in the beginning of the year with attendance falling off in the spring.

Alamosa RE-11J School District

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¹⁵ 1 CCR 301-31

Figure 25: Percentage of CPP-Participating School Districts Reporting Use of High-Impact Family Engagement Strategies in 2020-21



In 2020-21, 75 school districts, 42.6 percent of districts participating in CPP, reported using all eight family engagement strategies.



Looking Ahead

Colorado's commitment to early learning is clear. The formation and organization of a new Colorado Department of Early Childhood demonstrates the strong commitment of policy makers to support children and their educators from birth and beyond. A strong, early start in all developmental domains is key for lifelong success, as developmental scientists consider the period from birth through age 8 as critical for setting the stage for children's later achievement.¹⁶ When children experience a coherent, aligned educational system that supports each child's developmental and academic needs, positive outcomes are sustained. CDE's partnership with this new agency will seek to support that coherence and alignment, involving the cooperation of preschool programs, districts, community organizations, schools, and families.



¹⁶ Kauerz, K. (2013, March/April). The Path to Lifelong Success Begins With P-3. Principal. Retrieved from: https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/Kauerz_MA13.pdf

Conclusion

Through multiple expansions and transitions, the Colorado Preschool Program has demonstrated its resiliency. The relationships built, the outcomes achieved, and the perseverance shown all demonstrate the success of the program over more than 30 years. The high quality preschool services achieved through the Colorado Preschool Program have impacted the lives of hundreds of thousands of children, and CDE commits to continue to partner in realizing positive outcomes for Colorado's youngest learners.



Data Appendix

This section includes supplemental notes and cohort definitions for grade retention results.

Grade Retention: Cohort Definitions

Cohort 1:

CPP = CPP in 2013-14,
K in 2014-15

At Risk, No History of State-Funded Preschool = No history of state-funded preschool and eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch in first grade in 2015-16

Cohort 2:

CPP = CPP in 2014-15,
K in 2015-16

At Risk, No History of State-Funded Preschool = No history of state-funded preschool and eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch in first grade in 2016-17

Cohort 3:

CPP = CPP in 2015-16,
K in 2016-17

At Risk, No History of State-Funded Preschool = No history of state-funded preschool and eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch in first grade in 2017-18

N SIZE		
COHORT	CPP	COMPARISON GROUP
COHORT 1	15,435	16,856
COHORT 2	13,732	12,674
COHORT 3	17,146	10,736

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