Attachment Q

Colorado Preschool Program
2013 Legislative Report

COLORADO
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children • families • communities
Office of Early Learning & School Readiness

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Colorado Preschool Program
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Greetings from the Colorado Department of Education!

We are pleased to present the General Assembly with the 2013 Legislative Report on the Colorado Preschool Program.

This year's report provides you with important facts and figures that tell the story of how the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) was implemented during the 2011-2012 school year. Our report includes powerful outcomes data that illustrate the tremendous growth made by the children who benefitted from the high quality preschool experiences that CPP funding affords. In anticipation of the rollout of school readiness assessment and planning requirements under Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K – Senate Bill 08 -212), we have also included information about the four components of readiness and what role CPP plays in assuring that our youngest learners are on track for success.

We wish to thank you for your continued support of CPP. This important program is making great strides in helping to close the achievement gap and bringing about meaningful, long-lasting change for children and families.

Respectfully,

Robert K. Hammond
Commissioner of Education

State Board of Education School Readiness Description

School Readiness describes both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students enrolled in publicly funded preschool or kindergarten. School Readiness is enhanced when schools, families, and community service providers work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning in academic content.

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CPP in 2011-2012— *By the Numbers*

Slots Authorized by the Legislature—20,160

Total Enrollment—19,480

Actual enrollment is lower than the number of authorized slots due to children served full-day using two slots.

Number of School Districts Participating—171

Out of 179 districts including Charter School Institute

Total Program Funding—$67,106,863

Compared to $5.163 billion total funding in K-12

Average Funding per Slot—$3,329

Average Number of Risk Factors per Child—2.9

Self-reported by school districts in the CPP Reapplication and Annual Report.

Districts Monitored by Advisory Councils—100%

All participating districts as required per statute

Districts Giving Vision/Hearing Screening—93%

158 of 171 participating districts

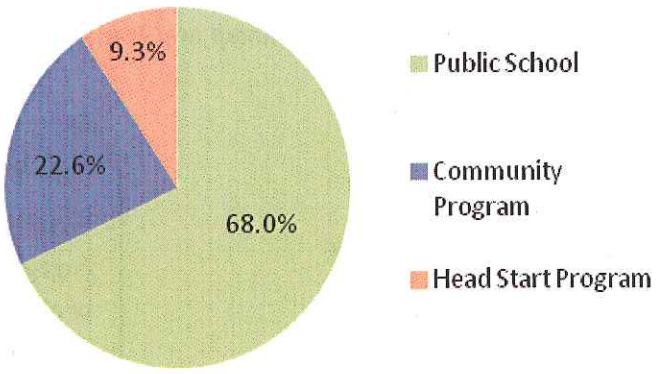
CPP Eligible Children with No Funding—8,016

Self-reported waiting list numbers by school districts in the CPP Reapplication and Annual Report. Exact level of need estimated to be significantly higher.

Estimated Unmet Need for CPP

Using additional data from the State Demography Office and state pupil counts, an estimate provided to the Joint Budget Committee showed that as many as **12,010** at-risk four-year-olds had no preschool available to them either through CPP or Head Start.

Where CPP Children Were Served



In the 2010-2011 school year, more than one-third (36.7%) of CPP District Advisory Councils had no existing private partner programs in their community, meaning their only option was to serve children in public schools.

Last year, 113 CPP slots were contracted to charter schools by District Advisory Councils, including High Point Academy and schools in Denver, St. Vrain, Clear Creek, Jefferson, and Park School Districts.

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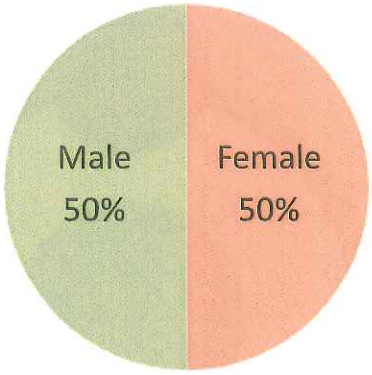
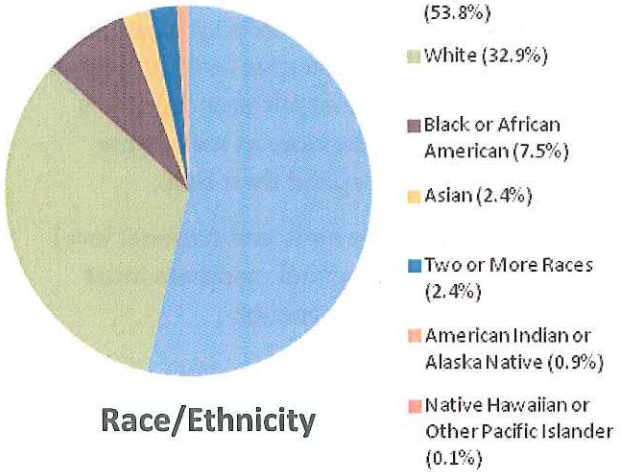
CPP in 2011-2012— *By the Numbers*



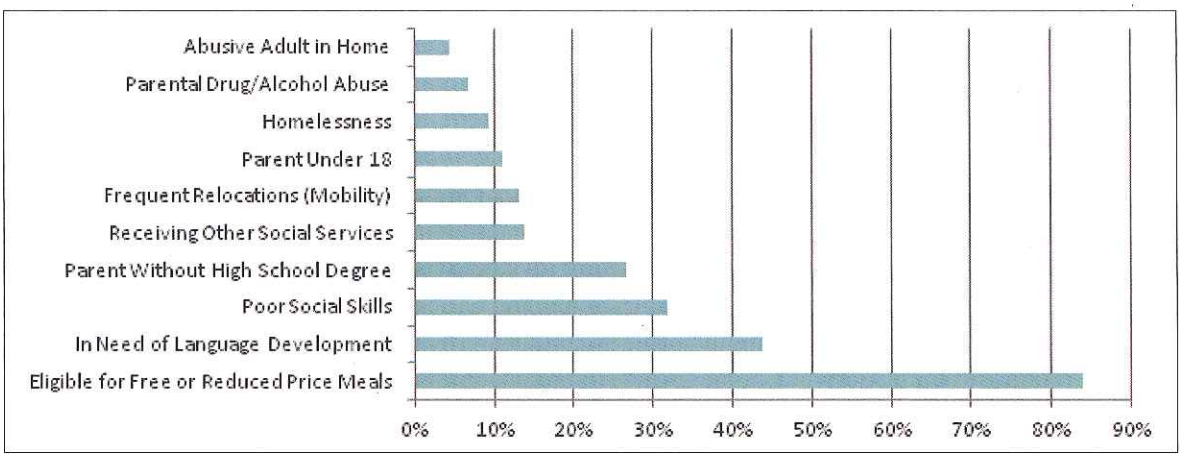
Gender



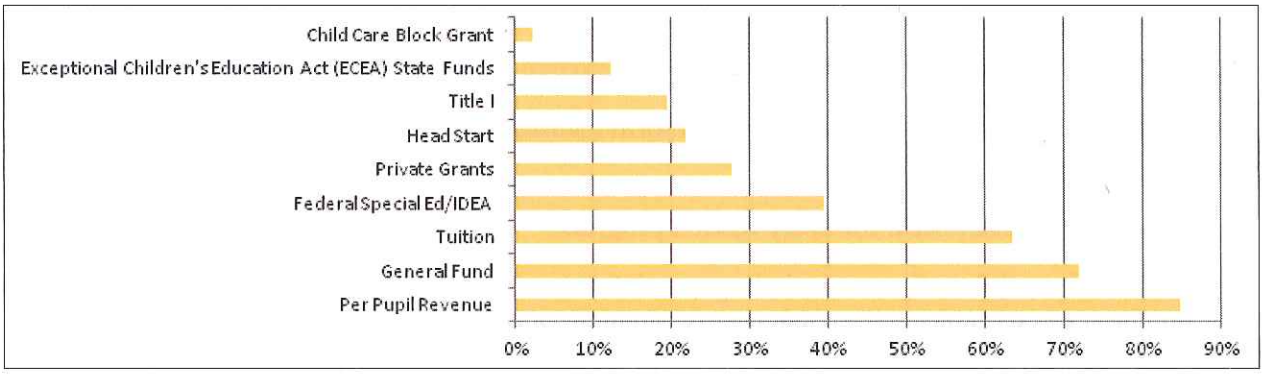
Race/Ethnicity

CPP Risk/Eligibility Factors

(each line represents the percentage of CPP-funded children eligible for that risk factor)



In 2012, we asked each participating school district, "In addition to CPP, which other funding sources do you use to support your early childhood education program?"



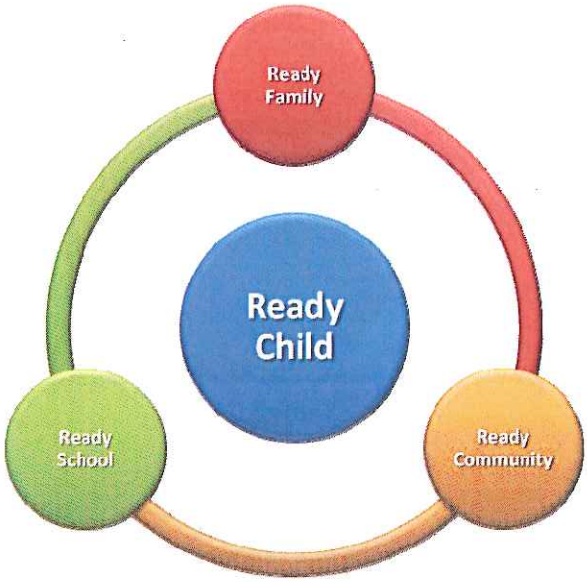
The Ready Child Equation

Children's readiness for school is made up of multiple components and shaped by numerous factors. Improving school readiness, therefore, must address children's development of skills and behaviors as well as the environments in which they spend their time.

Early childhood leaders at the state and national level agree that efforts to improve school readiness must address three interrelated components:

- Children's readiness for school
- School's readiness for children
- The capacity of families and communities to provide developmental opportunities for their young children

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Initiative." *www.GettingReady.org*. National School Readiness Initiative. February 2005.



High Quality Preschool and the Connection to School Readiness

In order to maximize the positive influence of preschool on school readiness, school districts participating in the Colorado Preschool Program must commit to high quality preschool practices. These include practices such as:

- Design of *high quality preschool classroom environments* including small class size, low ratio of children to adults and adherence to the Quality Standards.
- *Program improvement* efforts such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation or the Qualistar rating system. In 2011, **27%** of all sites serving CPP children received a rating through the Qualistar four-star quality rating system. Of those, **93% were three- or four-star rated.**
- The use of *authentic and ongoing assessment* to inform instruction and to measure child growth and outcomes over time.
- *Family support and involvement* for every district program.
- District councils with broad community representation *monitoring program quality.*
- *Individual transition planning* for each child to facilitate transition between preschool and kindergarten.

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I'm getting ready for school!

Nurturing and stimulating experiences in the first five years of life are crucial for the acquisition of developmental and learning foundations necessary for long term success. As Colorado's young children begin kindergarten or first grade, have their prior experiences given them a strong foundation of developmental skills upon which they can build more complex thinking and learning abilities? Or have their life experiences been less than optimal, perhaps even detrimental such that they will need additional supports in order to continue to learn the basics?

Answers to these questions about the whole child must be attained in order to build a roadmap which supports children's ability to succeed in a school setting. Only then can appropriate instruction be designed to maximize each child's potential for learning. Such a roadmap allows children to apply critical thinking skills and creativity across academic domains such as literacy and math. Children thereby gain well-rounded knowledge about their surrounding environment, enabling them to positively contribute to their community in school and beyond.

The Colorado Preschool Program supports child readiness in numerous ways, including:

- Program staff who build nurturing, supportive relationships with children and their families
- Well-planned classroom environments and routines that encourage active engagement and independence
- Activities that support learning and development in all domains
- Learning opportunities that encourage exploration, experimentation, critical thinking and problem solving
- Ongoing assessment of child progress
- Individualized instructional planning

> Having a preschool program in place at Campo Elementary has proven beneficial to me as a 4th-5th grade teacher. I feel that the students coming out of our preschool enter into elementary school with a very solid foundation to begin the learning process.
>
> -Teacher, Campo Public Schools

My family is getting ready for school, too!

Ready families include parents and other adults who provide a positive, supportive relationship and promote healthy development and early learning.

Classroom staff provide a welcoming environment, participate in positive interactions with family members, and provide various experiences to convey the message that every family is a valued, welcomed partner.

When families are welcomed and empowered, they are ready to contribute to the school community and be involved in the child's learning process in preschool and beyond.

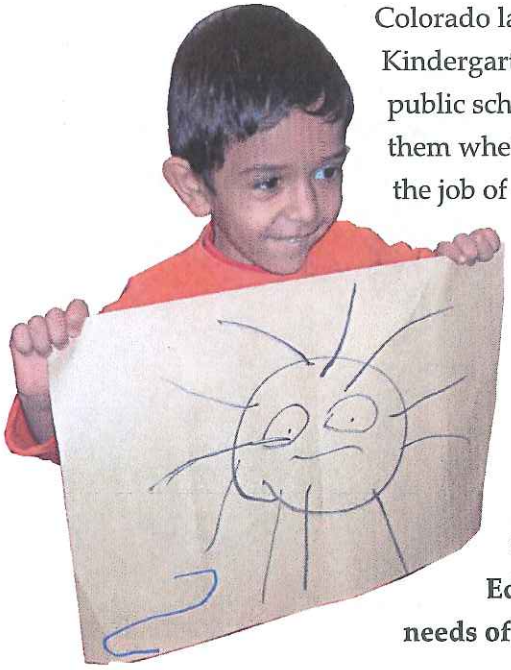
The Colorado Preschool Program supports family readiness in many ways, including:

- Program staff members who take an interest in the well-being of the family and child
- Programs that welcome family members into the classroom environment
- Staff members who view family members as partners in the preschool experience
- Activities that promote family-to-family support and involvement in the school community
- Informed staff members who connect families to community resources that support family success
- Staff members who help families encourage learning through everyday routines and activities at home
- Teachers who engage families in the process of assessing children's progress

When I asked the mom in what way has preschool been a benefit for her family and child, she said, "Oh, there are so many things. He used to cry when I would leave. He finds M's everywhere (his name is Mikey) and he writes the letters in his name now. The letters are all over the paper but he writes each letter." I asked her to write down the most important and she wrote, "learning to be friends with everyone."

Sheryl Hough, Fort Lupton RE-8

Is my school ready?



Colorado law states that children are required to attend school starting at age six. Kindergarten attendance is not mandatory in our state. Children may enter public school at kindergarten or first grade, and schools must be ready to receive them whether or not they have had preschool and kindergarten experiences. It is the job of the public school system to meet each child at his/her individual levels and move forward from there. Years of research have shown that school success does not just depend on academic skills. Programs must consider the whole child. Children come to public schools with a wide range of positive and negative experiences, such that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot work.

The Colorado Preschool Program requires use of the *Quality Standards* for continuous program improvement. These expectations mirror the *Ten Keys to Ready Schools* identified by the National Education Goals Panel and support schools to be ready to meet the needs of young children and families.

National Education Goals Panel Ten Keys to Ready Schools

Ready schools:

- Smooth the transition between home and school.
- Strive for continuity between early care and education programs and elementary schools.
- Help children learn and make sense of their complex and exciting world.
- Are committed to the success of every child.
- Are committed to the success of every teacher and every adult who interacts with children during the school day.
- Introduce or expand approaches that have been shown to raise achievement.
- Are learning organizations that alter practices and programs if they do not benefit children.
- Serve children in communities.
- Take responsibility for results.
- Have strong leadership.

Accessed at: http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp/reports/readysch.pdf

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Is my community ready?

Communities play a vital role in supporting school readiness for children. Ready communities offer family resources such as: parks and libraries, adult literacy and English language classes, parenting classes, home visiting programs, basic health and nutrition services, mental health counseling, screening and referral for children with disabilities, substance abuse counseling and child abuse prevention.

Local Colorado Preschool Program representatives support the readiness of communities through collaboration with a broad group of stakeholders on the CPP school district advisory council and through active engagement in the local Early Childhood Council and other key community organizations.

The Alamosa CPP District Council has worked together with their Early Childhood Council and the RE-11J school district to continue to serve preschool children within their region's fiscal limits.

For example, district budget cuts meant that school nurse services were reduced. Their District Council worked with the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to train all of their preschool teachers to administer vision screenings. BOCES will assist sites in providing training for hearing screenings next year.

In 2011-12, the Colorado Department of Human Services (CHDS) used CPP funding to draw down $27 million in federal funding, through maintenance of effort (MOE) and match funding for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF).

Measuring Progress—How do you *test* a preschooler?

There are many ways to assess what older students know and are able to do. Students often take part in direct assessment activities. They might meet with a teacher and respond to direct questions, perform tasks at the teacher's request or take a paper and pencil test. For our youngest learners, though, assessment looks very different. Through the Results Matter assessment and outcomes program, classroom teams assess preschoolers in all areas of learning and development by taking short notes about things they observe children doing, saying and creating and collecting work samples such as drawings, paintings and writing samples. They may video record children actively engaged in classroom activities, and they request additional information from families. This evidence makes up each child's assessment portfolio. Classroom teams in publicly funded preschool programs in Colorado use one of two approved assessment systems: Teaching Strategies GOLD®, used by 91% of local programs, or the HighScope Child Observation Record (COR), used by 9% of local programs. These assessments serve as the guiding framework for reflecting on each child's portfolio and rating the children's learning using research-based indicators.

Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative

The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative consisted of 17 state teams working together to create school readiness policy. Research from this project confirmed that children's readiness for school does not depend on discrete, stand-alone skills, but instead includes a range of physical, social, emotional, language, and cognitive skills.

A child's strong foundation includes skills in the developmental areas of:

- Social-emotional—Establishes and maintains relationships with others, communicate needs and feelings while interacting with adults and friends, and demonstrates self control skills
- Physical, fine/gross motor, and health—Grows and develops properly, uses large muscles and small muscles to participate in tasks
- Language and literacy—Understands, speaks and communicates with others, constantly learns and uses new vocabulary
- Thinking and cognition—Demonstrates curiosity, enthusiasm, initiative, attends to activities, uses problem solving skills and persists to complete tasks

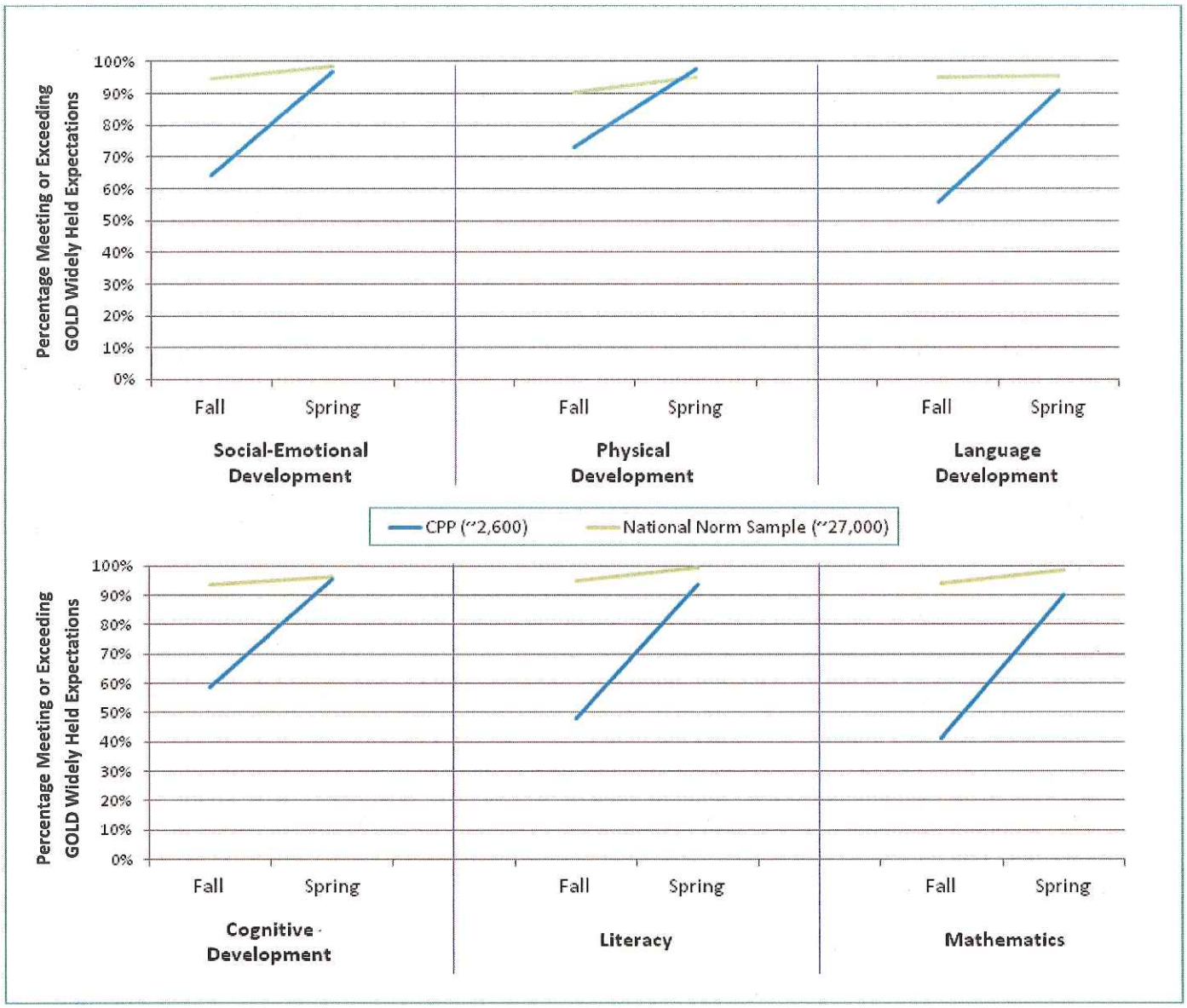
Another key finding showed that school readiness efforts are most effective when everyone involved embraces the rich cultural and language backgrounds of families and children.

Accessed at: http://www.gettingready.org/matriarch/MultiPiecePage.asp_Q_PageID_E_318_A_PageName_E_NationalSchoolReadinessIndicat

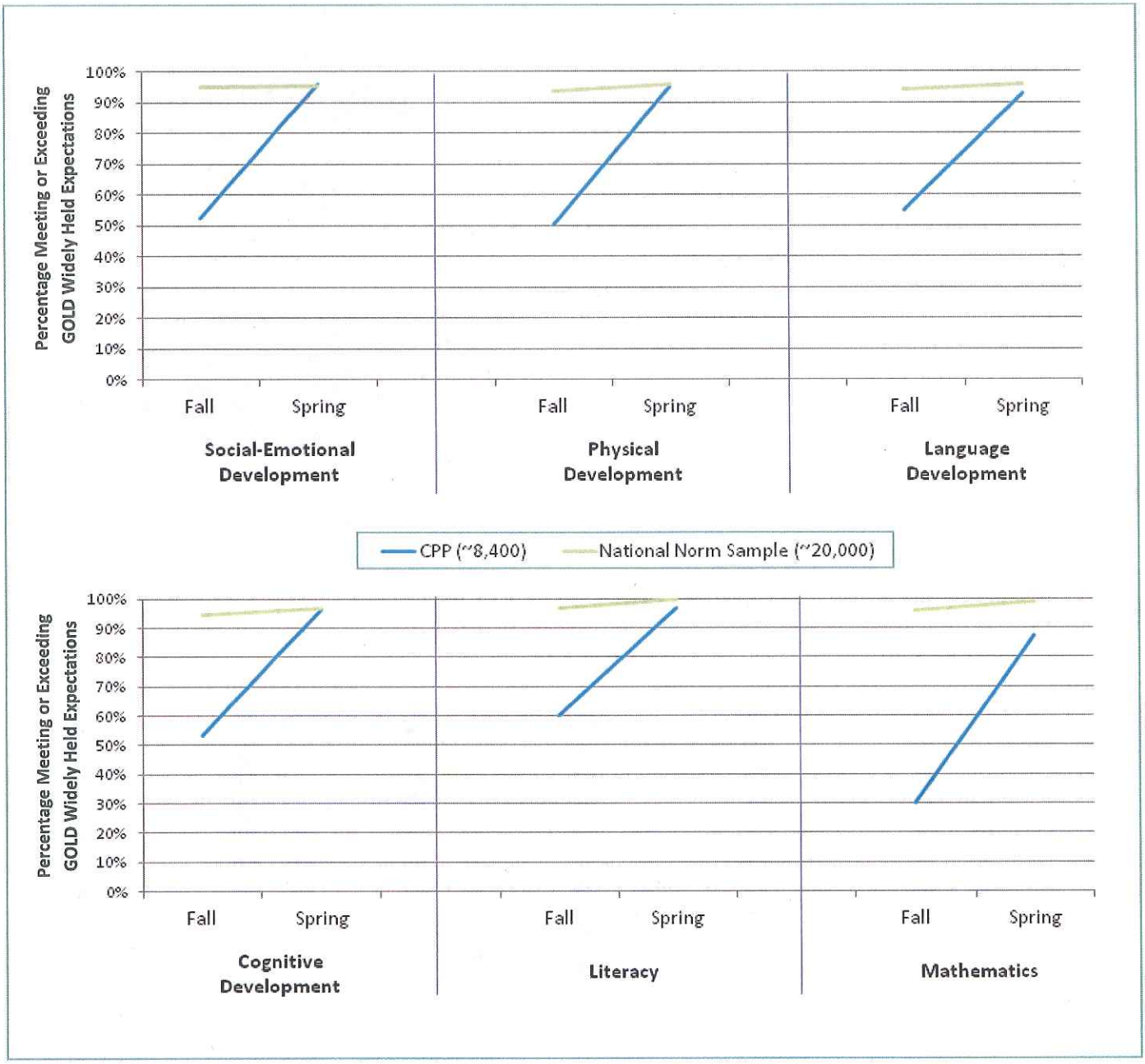
CPP: Closing the Achievement Gap

The following graphs summarize the tremendous growth made by children in the Colorado Preschool Program. Their overall growth trend (represented by the blue lines) is impressive as it clearly shows that **CPP-funded children closed the gap with more typically developing peers**. Data for the typical peers (represented by the green lines) come from a nationally representative group used to validate the GOLD assessment, meaning Colorado's preschoolers compare favorably to a wide range of children in other states by the end of the year.

Teaching Strategies GOLD | 2011-12 Growth | Three-Year-Olds

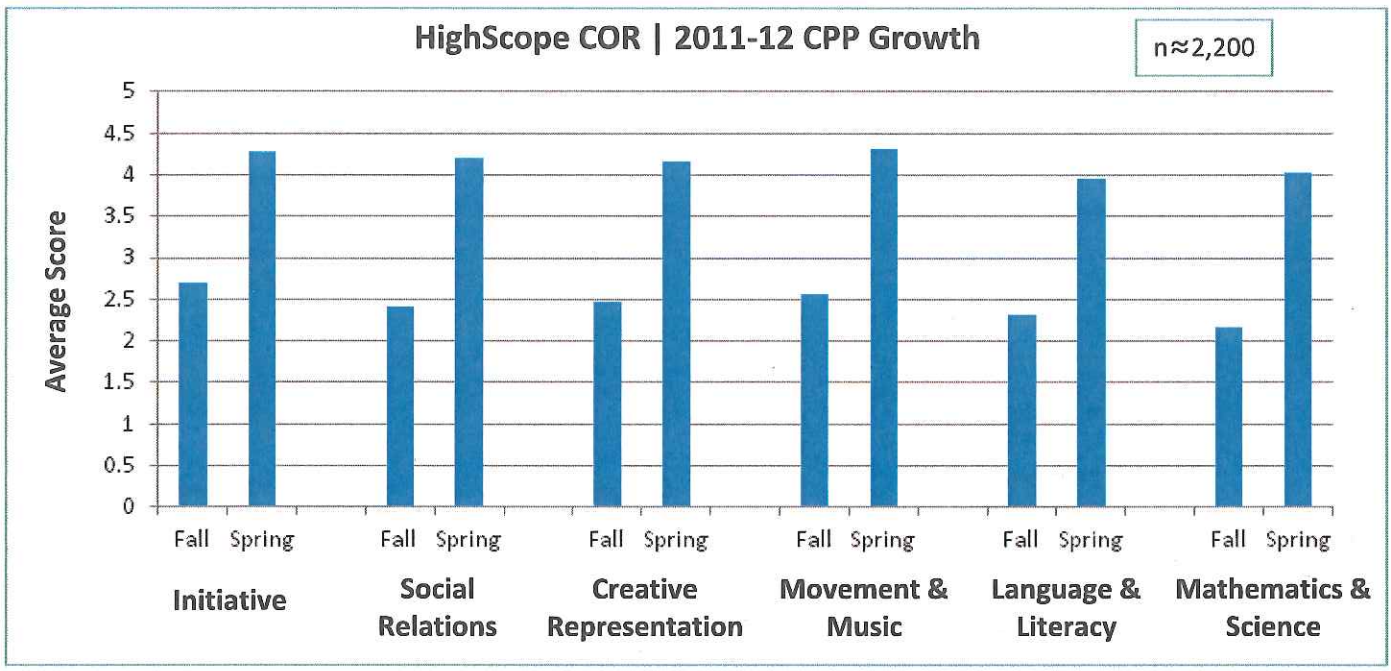


Teaching Strategies GOLD | 2011-12 Growth | Four-Year-Olds



HighScope Child Observation Record (COR)

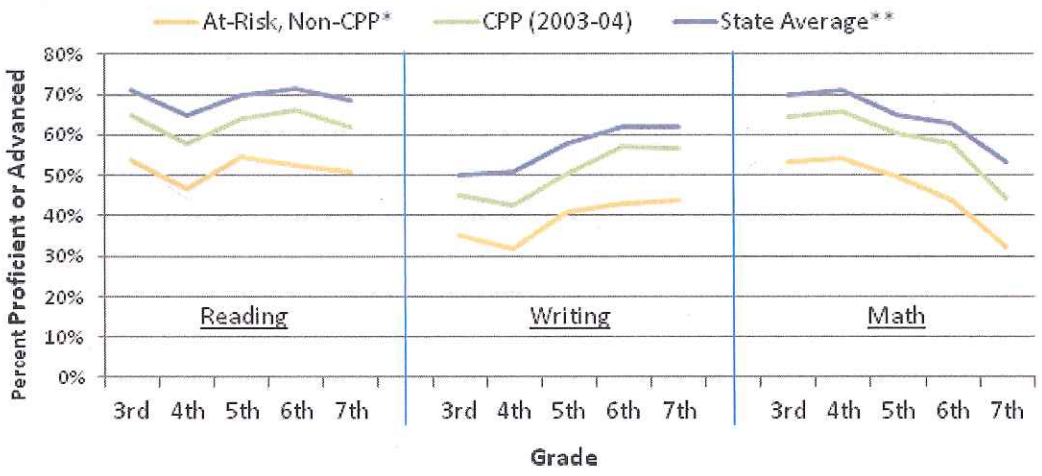
The chart below demonstrates once again the significant progress made by children funded by Colorado Preschool program in the course of one year. Children exhibit strong developmental progress, on average more than one full point on the HighScope COR scale, in the course of just one year in each domain.



Longitudinal Results

Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)/Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP)

CSAP/TCAP Grades 3-7 Outcomes



**At-Risk, Non-CPP* is defined as children eligible for free or reduced price meals in first grade with no history of funding from CPP.

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

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

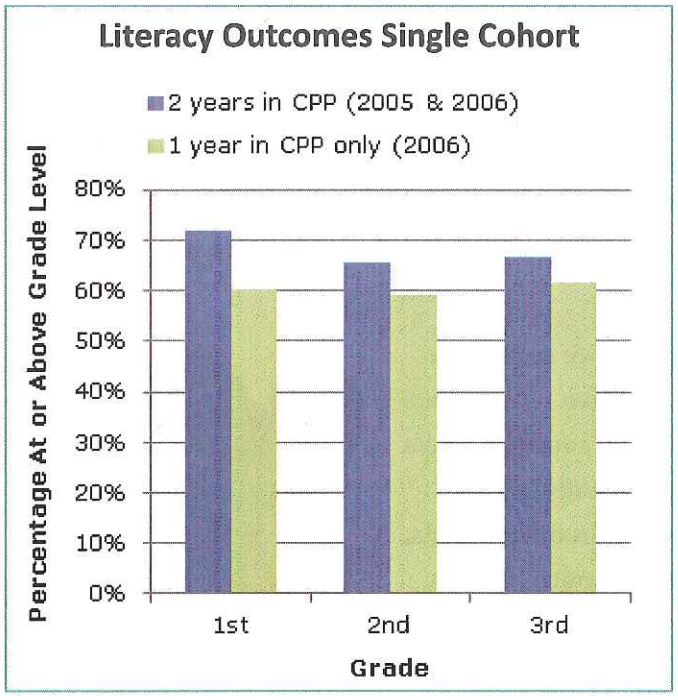
The state can track the longitudinal growth of students in CPP to see the long term impact on CSAP/TCAP results. When we do that, we see that students in CPP have a long term benefit from the program when compared to a matched cohort of students who did not participate in CPP. For this cohort, we examine third through seventh grade CSAP/TCAP results.

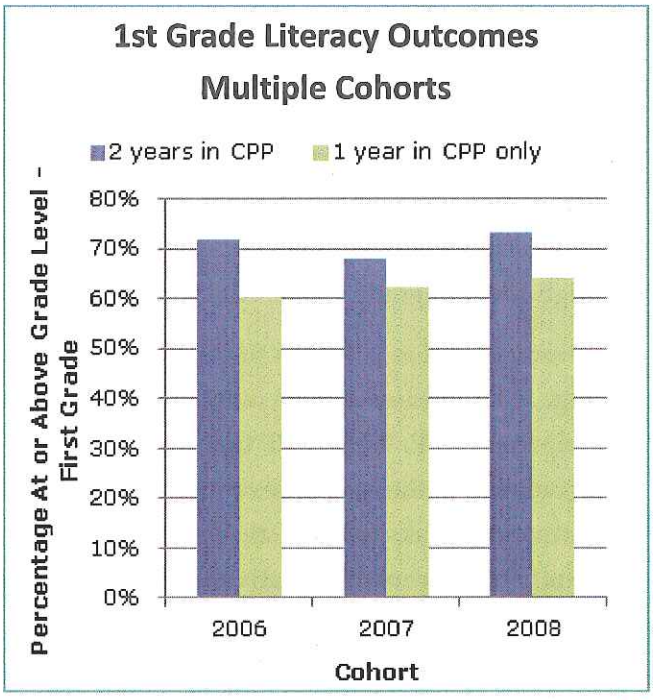
As demonstrated in previous findings, even in seventh grade, we see that on average, CPP graduates have outperformed other at-risk children who did not participate in CPP. While CPP trajectories follow those of state averages (most unfortunately in the case of seventh grade math), their consistently higher performance speaks to the lasting effects of quality preschool. **In other words, academic improvements relative to similar peers do *not* fade out.**

Longitudinal Literacy Outcomes

Student outcomes in literacy further confirm the positive impact of CPP. In kindergarten through third grade, teachers are asked to identify whether children are at grade level, below grade level, or above grade level in literacy skills. This decision is made based on a body of evidence including children's work samples and scores from early literacy assessments like the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2), Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

For children who are identified for CPP participation at age three, and therefore benefit from two years in the program, literacy results are even more impressive. The charts below confirm a wide body of research demonstrating the added benefit of multiple years of quality early intervention versus a single year. The graph on the left shows literacy outcomes in first through third grade for one particular cohort. On average, those children who participated in CPP for two years clearly outperformed those who participated for only year. The graph on the right shows literacy outcomes in first grade for three different cohorts of CPP-funded children, in order to confirm that the effect occurs across not just one but many groups. Again, the message rings true: more sustained quality preschool tends to benefit children who are at risk for later problems with literacy.





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Acknowledgements

The Colorado Preschool Program would like to thank each of the CPP District Advisory Council members, teachers and coordinators for their efforts in collecting and reporting data on the effectiveness of CPP.

We also want to extend a special thank you to the children, teachers and families whose pictures are featured throughout the report.

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