Quality pre-kindergarten (pre-K) increases school readiness. When paired with a quality K-12 experience, it also leads to significant gains in academic achievement, college completion, and employment.

A STRONG START FOR COLORADO

Pre-K is the year of school prior to kindergarten. Publicly-funded pre-K programs can either be targeted or universal, depending on funding availability and policy goals.

**TARGETED**

Serves children who are at the highest risk for starting kindergarten behind

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) serves three- to five-year-olds who have risk factors such as low-income, high mobility, homelessness, or teen parents.

- **75%** LESS LIKELY TO BE RETAINED IN FIRST GRADE
- **7%** LESS LIKELY TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT READING DEFICIENCY IN KINDERGARTEN

**UNIVERSAL**

Serves all children in the year before they enter kindergarten

The Denver Preschool Program (DPP) is a universal and voluntary local program, offering a tuition credit to all four-year-olds in the city on a sliding scale.

- **82.4%** MEETING OR EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS IN VOCABULARY
- **83-92%** OF DPP CHILDREN WERE READY FOR KINDERGARTEN

MORE LIKELY TO GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL ON TIME

FEWER LOW-INCOME STUDENTS ON A LITERACY IMPROVEMENT PLAN
STANDARDS FOR SUCCESS

SKILLED TEACHERS. Effective pre-K teachers have special knowledge in early childhood development and the skills to support how young children learn.

SIZE-WISE CLASSES. Nationally recognized standards call for small class sizes of 20 students or fewer with a staff-to-student ratio of 1:10 or better. This allows for more quality interactions.

AGE-APPROPRIATE LEARNING. Young children do best in classrooms that provide a combination of play, exploration, and teacher-directed activities as part of curricula that focus on all areas of development, including physical and social-emotional.

CRITICAL CONNECTIONS. Children best learn and grow when all adults are operating from a unified approach. When teachers and families collaborate, and later grades align with child care settings, pre-K gains can be maximized.

IMPLEMENTATION NEEDS

ACCESS SHOULD BE EQUITABLE FOR ALL. Thoughtful design of high-quality pre-K programs can ensure that children have equitable opportunities to enter kindergarten ready to learn. Programs can accomplish this by:

- supporting children with special needs, diverse languages, and cultures;
- creating availability across neighborhoods and settings that are easily accessible to families; and
- coordinating with other services families use, such as child care.

PARENT CHOICE MEANS MIXED-DELIVERY. Pre-K is delivered both in school and community settings that meet Colorado state standards. Parents need to be able to choose the licensed, quality program that works best for their family, whether that is in a neighbor’s home, a local center, or a public school.

INFANT-TODDLER CARE IS ESSENTIAL. Many communities already struggle to serve young children due to a lack of licensed early care and education settings and a lack of teachers. Expansion of public pre-K programs must be carefully designed so that it doesn’t cut into services for infants and toddlers, where there are already large program gaps.

QUALITY GETS RESULTS. Investment in high-quality pre-K programs can reduce the opportunity gap and lead to long-term gains in the classroom and in life.

CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

A Center for American Progress study estimates that high-quality universal pre-K would have a significant impact on improving achievement gaps for kindergarten entry.

45% reduced gap in math for African American children
78% reduced gap in math for Hispanic children
27% reduced gap in math for low-income children
41% reduced gap in reading for low-income children

Learn more: earlymilestones.org