



EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO

The Future of Preschool in Colorado

BRIEF 1 OF 7

An Overview



Preschool for All

On November 3, 2020, Colorado voters passed a ballot measure (Proposition EE) that will pay for all children in their year before kindergarten to attend preschool at least 10 hours per week. Children from low-income families or those who may not be ready for kindergarten will have access to more preschool. The program starts in the fall of 2023.

Before then, legislators will need to pass bills about how the program will work and who will run it. State and local agencies will need to establish rules and processes to launch and operate the program well. Knowing this, Governor Polis asked the Colorado

Children's Campaign to lead a process to get the ideas and input of state and local leaders, early care and education advocates, preschool providers, early educators, and families. Early Milestones Colorado supported this process by conducting research, providing data, organizing learning topics, and securing expert speakers. That process began before Proposition EE even passed and is still ongoing.

This brief is one in a series that explores key topics related to preschool for all and summarizes input from stakeholders from across the state.

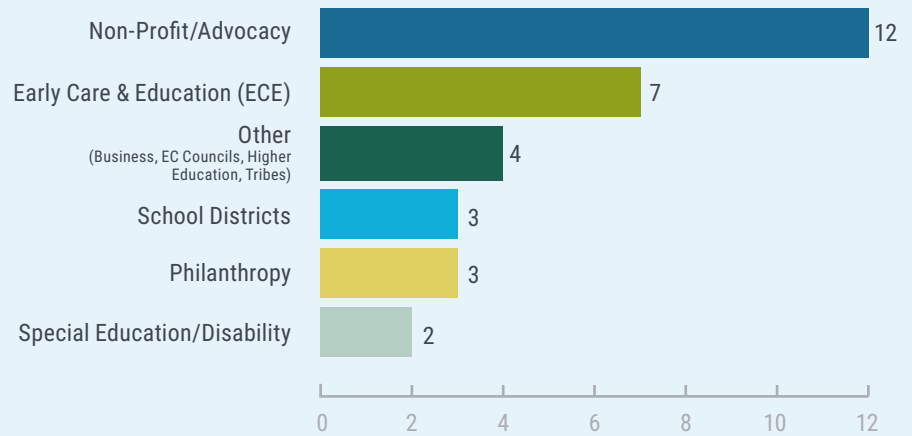
Engagement Process

OVERVIEW

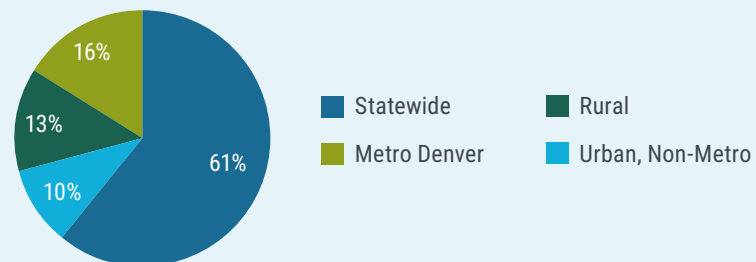
The Colorado Children's Campaign developed a three-part process to engage people interested in providing input on how a statewide, universal preschool program might be designed. The process includes a leadership committee, an advisory group, and community input sessions.

The **Preschool Policy Leadership Committee (PPLC)** includes thirty-one members, appointed by the governor, who represent a range of interests and areas of the state (see graphs). The primary purpose of the committee is to lead the development of preschool program design ideas for consideration by policymakers. Between July and December 2020, the committee met seven times to engage in shared learning and discuss key topics (described more below). Since January 2021, the committee has been meeting regularly to explore policy ideas related to program governance and funding.

PRESCHOOL POLICY LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBER AFFILIATION (N=31)



PRESCHOOL POLICY LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE REGIONS OF FOCUS (N=31)



UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

The term "universal preschool" refers to preschool that is:

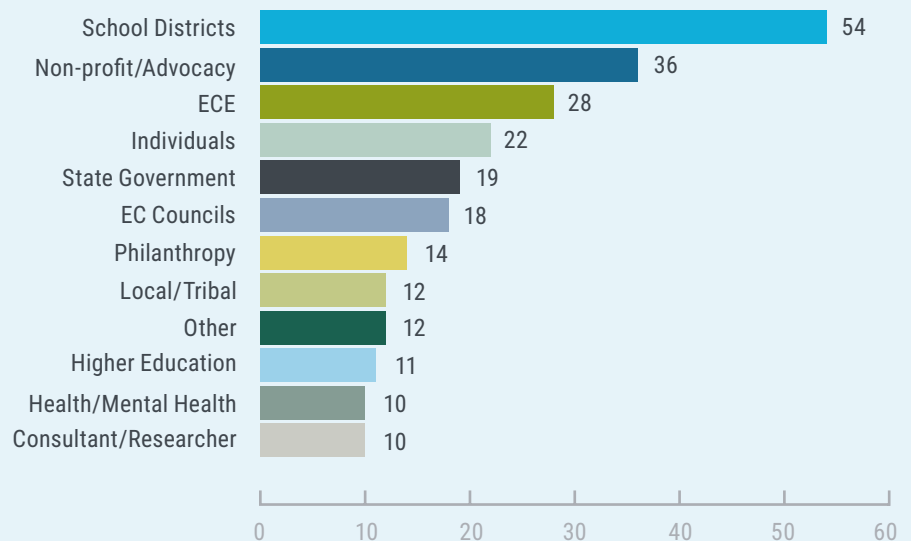
- ✓ available to all children who meet age criteria

AND

- ✓ funded for all who enroll

The **Preschool Policy Advisory Group (PPAG)** is open to anyone with an interest in informing the design of Colorado's universal preschool program. The group met seven times between August 2020 and February 2021, with an average of 180 people representing a wide variety of organizations attending each meeting.

PRESCHOOL POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEMBER AFFILIATIONS (N=246)

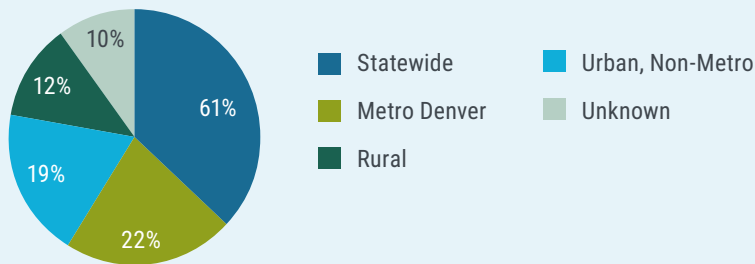


Other includes: federal government, business, Family Resource Centers, special education/disability interests.

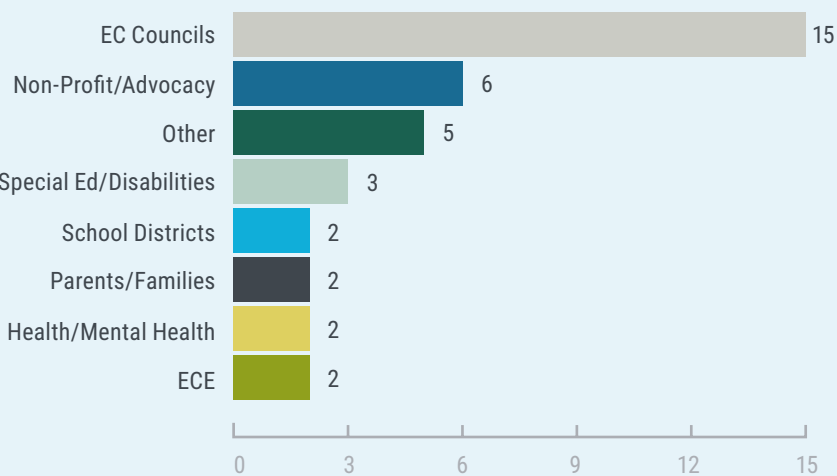
In total, 246 participants from across the state attended at least one meeting or requested to be part of the group's email list. The group's main purpose is to engage in shared learning and provide input on the same key topics that the PPLC has discussed.

To engage community members who might not have the time to participate in the advisory group meetings, the Children's Campaign created a **Community Engagement Toolkit**, which was used by over three dozen local groups to hold more than 50

PRESCHOOL POLICY ADVISORY GROUP REGIONS OF FOCUS (N=246)

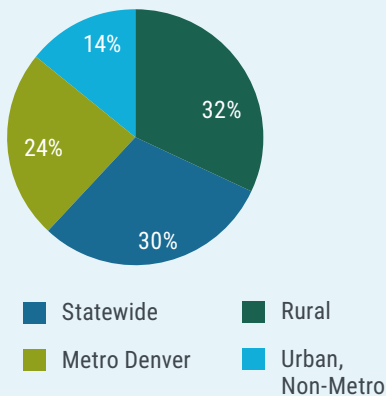


TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS HOLDING COMMUNITY INPUT SESSIONS (N=37)



Other includes: state government, tribal organizations, local child care associations, immigrant services, and Family Resource Centers

REGIONS OF FOCUS OF COMMUNITY INPUT SESSIONS (N=37)



engagement sessions across the state between October 2020 and March 2021. Almost half of the state's early childhood councils held input sessions. One third of community engagement opportunities were in rural parts of the state. Another third included statewide interests. The rest were held in Metro Denver or other urban areas of the state (see graphs above). Community input sessions were one-time opportunities that each lasted 90 minutes to two hours. Each session addressed: 1) participants' hopes and fears for universal preschool in Colorado, 2) their goals for children in the year before kindergarten, 3) their definition of quality preschool, and 4) what they think will make an expansion of preschool successful.



KEY TOPICS

The PPLC and PPAG each focused on five topics central to launching a universal preschool program:

PROGRAM QUALITY: Classroom and teacher characteristics that create an excellent learning environment for young children. This can include factors such as group sizes and ratios, curriculum choices, teacher education, and how classrooms are assessed.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY: Criteria that children and preschool programs need to meet to participate in universal preschool. Criteria can include child age and residency, and preschool licensing status or programming.

FUNDING: How money might flow from the state to preschool programs and/or families and how money might be divided across different types of preschool programs and regions of the state.

GOVERNANCE: Operation of the state's universal preschool program, including distributing funds, coordinating with community partners and school districts, and monitoring program effectiveness.

WORKFORCE: Recruitment and retention of preschool teachers who are well-prepared to nurture and educate young children. Factors include teacher training, pay, professional coaching, and working conditions.

The Community Input sessions sought opinions more broadly on participants' hopes and goals for universal preschool and how to realize those at the community level.

Cornerstones of the Work

Participants from all three input opportunities have identified core values that they want to see embedded in the design of a universal preschool program. Most of the “fundamental cornerstones” described here came out of the PPLC, but reflect similar values that the PPAG and the Community Input sessions also raised.

Provide preschool for all with additional programming for those who need it:

All preschoolers in their year before kindergarten are invited and welcomed into Colorado's universal preschool program. Children who need extra support can get it.

Promote equity: Children and families who have historically experienced barriers can easily access the preschool

programs that meet their needs and cultures. All early educators have equitable access to training, jobs, and fair pay.

Ensure age-appropriate programming that addresses the whole child: Children are welcomed into a joyful environment that supports all aspects of their growth and development.

Make things easy for families and preschools: Governing and coordinating agencies take on funding and administrative details so families and preschools can focus on the children.

Connect preschool with child care options that families want and need: Families have access to programs that fit their lives, support their work schedules, and align with their culture.

Support and raise up early childhood educators: All early childhood educators have access to convenient and affordable training, fair pay and benefits, and respect for the work that they do.

Encourage promising and evidence-based practices: Governing and coordinating agencies promote a learning culture that values innovation.

Collect and use data to get results for children: Meaningful data about children's outcomes are used to make timely programming and policy decisions so that all children are ready for kindergarten.

Create a better system of early care and education for children of all ages: Families and service providers experience smooth connections and transitions across a strong system of services.



Governance

A key factor in the design of a publicly-funded preschool program in Colorado is identifying a program administrator (referred to here as governance). There is not one correct

form of governance that is right for all states. Each must identify priorities, consider its own unique needs, and look at the pros and cons of different choices.¹

National Landscape

States use one of three key models of governance of early care and education:²

Created model: An early childhood-specific lead agency is responsible for multiple programs and functions.

Consolidated model: Multiple program functions, including preschool and child care, are managed by a single agency that also has broader responsibilities.

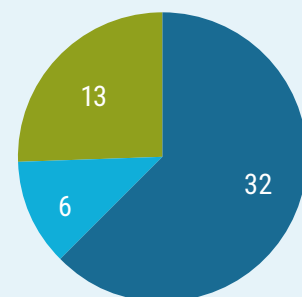
Coordinated model: Early childhood programs are administered by two or more agencies that work together to align rules, processes, and funding requirements.³

A state may consider several factors when choosing a governance model, such as how well their current structure is working and whether it meets the needs of parents, children, and providers.

State Landscape

Colorado uses the **coordinated** governance model. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is the governing body for the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) and Colorado Preschool Special Education. The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) is the governing body for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) and for child care licensing and quality, which also apply to the state's preschool programs. Program providers and agencies must coordinate to align standards, funding requirements, eligibility criteria, and data.

GOVERNANCE MODELS IN USE
BY US STATES (INCLUDES DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA)



■ Created
■ Consolidated
■ Coordinated

1 Weyer, M. & Fischer A. (2020, November). *Early Learning Governance Models*. Presentation to the Colorado Preschool Policy Leadership Committee.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

Stakeholder Input on Colorado's Current Approach

Stakeholders and community members identified several benefits and challenges of Colorado's current approach to governing early care and education. Common themes from the Future of Preschool in Colorado engagement process are included here.

BENEFITS

Departmental Specialties. Within both CDE and CDHS, there are program components that work well and achieve key goals of the early childhood system. Housing CPP and Preschool Special Education within the education system supports alignment between early childhood and grade school. The licensing and quality improvement systems at CDHS set common standards across school- and community-based programs.

Existing Infrastructure. Colorado has systems within existing agencies to distribute and blend funding, oversee program administration, provide technical assistance, and manage provider qualifications. Maintaining this existing infrastructure may maximize certain efficiencies.

CHALLENGES

Lack of Alignment. There is not enough coordination or alignment between state agencies or across funding streams. Preschool programs have to manage different operational standards, funding criteria, and reporting requirements within a single classroom. This process is time-consuming and costly for providers, which impacts program quality and capacity.

Bureaucracy. Existing state agencies are large and cannot easily shift or respond to the needs of community programs and families. Complex rules, regulations, and contracting and application processes discourage participation.

NEEDED ADJUSTMENTS

Stakeholders identified several factors that they would like built into any universal preschool governance model:

Equity Focus. All populations need equitable access to high quality, culturally-responsive preschool opportunities. A governance model that anticipates and supports families' language and cultural needs will help make sure all families can participate.

Family Access. Families need an easy path to identifying and accessing preschool that fits their lives. Successful governance will build and adequately fund a strong referral system, actively reach out to all families, and honor family choice.

Inclusive Approach. Stakeholders want a governance model that invites and involves all program types, families, and community leaders in decision-making processes.

FUTURE OF PRESCHOOL IN COLORADO ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Preschool Policy Leadership Committee (PPLC): Thirty-one governor-appointed members who explore policy ideas for designing and implementing universal preschool.

Preschool Policy Advisory Group (PPAG): Open to anyone with an interest in informing program design, this group is focused on shared learning and input.

Community Input Sessions: One-time meetings hosted by more than 40 local or special-interest groups to get input on people's goals and concerns for universal preschool.

**For more information about the engagement process and methodology, visit earlymilestones.org/futureofpreschool.*



Stakeholder Input on Possible Solutions

Through the engagement process, three governance options were evaluated for administration of universal preschool in Colorado:

- 1 Colorado Department of Education
- 2 Colorado Department of Human Services
- 3 New State Agency



1 COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PROS

- ✓ **Preschool-Grade School Alignment.** CDE administration of universal preschool can strengthen ties between early childhood and K-12 systems. It may also support a more seamless transition from preschool to grade school for families.
- ✓ **Special Education Needs.** CDE has a strong record of inclusive preschool classrooms that include both students with special education needs and typically-developing peers. Federal preschool special education funding⁴ also requires administration by the state department of education.
- ✓ **Workforce.** Universal preschool teachers will have the credibility of being part of the state education system. This may lead to better professional development, pay, and benefit opportunities.
- ✓ **Colorado Preschool Program.** CDE has over 30 years of experience and positive outcomes with the administration of the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). This success may inform universal preschool implementation.

CONS

- ✗ **Prioritization of School-based Programs.** Most CPP program sites are based in public and charter school settings. CDE administration of universal preschool may also result in an imbalance between school- and community-based preschools.
- ✗ **Academic Focus.** The department has an academic focus for K-12 students that might reduce the focus on whole-child, developmentally appropriate practice in preschool settings. Academic equity gaps at the older ages also raise concerns about pushing the factors that drive those gaps down to the preschool years.
- ✗ **CDE Board Governance.** CDE is governed by an elected board independent of any governor's administration. Over time, this may cause a divide between administration and board aims for the universal preschool program.
- ✗ **Early Childhood Disconnect.** The early care and learning system serves children starting at birth and includes the important infant and toddler years. Placing universal preschool within CDE, which has a primary focus on K-12, may create or deepen a division between preschool and birth through age three services. CDE also does not have the same safety and quality accountability infrastructure that is built into the broader early care and education system.

⁴ State Formula Grants. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Retrieved March 30, 2021, from <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/state-formula-grants>

PROS

- ✓ **Range of Services.** CDHS manages a number of programs for children and families. Housing universal preschool in the department may streamline family access to services and resources.
- ✓ **Funding Alignment.** CDHS already manages the state's child care assistance funding. The department could align CCCAP with universal preschool funding to reduce the coordination burden on programs and families.
- ✓ **Developmentally Appropriate Programming.** The department has experience supporting young children's growth and development through existing early childhood programs. CDHS may be well-prepared to support a developmentally appropriate focus within the universal preschool program as well.
- ✓ **Universal Applications.** Opportunities exist to develop a universal application process that would help families sign up for other human service programs when they register for universal preschool.

CONS

- ✗ **Oversight Function.** Community members and local programs may associate CDHS with its regulatory and oversight functions, such as licensing and child welfare. It may be more difficult to build public confidence in its ability to support implementation of a whole child preschool initiative.
- ✗ **Lack of Educational Focus.** CDHS does not have the same educational expertise and infrastructure as CDE, including specialized services, such as support for second language learners. This may impact their capacity to support the educational component of universal preschool.
- ✗ **Divided Preschool.** If CPP and/or Preschool Special Education stay within CDE and universal preschool is administered by CDHS, preschool administration in Colorado will be split across two agencies. This may increase existing challenges with cross-agency coordination.
- ✗ **No Child Outcome Tracking.** CDHS does not currently have a system for tracking child outcomes or for following children's outcomes into school years.

PROS

- ✓ **Leverage Agency Strengths.** The intent behind this solution is to move all early care and education programs to a single department. This new entity could use and build on the strengths of both CDE and CDHS, while avoiding the challenges of cross-agency coordination.
- ✓ **Mixed Delivery.** A new agency can support the goal of providing preschool in both school- and community-based settings without leaning toward one or the other.
- ✓ **Alignment.** A new agency may be able to blend funding at the state level to ease the burden on programs and families. It can also align program standards and requirements to streamline operations for participating early care and learning programs.
- ✓ **Fresh Start.** A new agency may be a chance to realize the values shared during this engagement process. There is hope this department would embrace a flexible, efficient, family-centered, and user-friendly approach.

CONS

- ✗ **Costs.** It will take financial, logistical, and political resources to create a new agency, so it is important to make sure the end result will be worth the costs involved. Voters may also perceive a new agency as an expansion of government.
- ✗ **Unrealized Alignment.** A new agency may just move programs, processes, and people without creating the desired coordination, alignment, and flexible culture.
- ✗ **K-12/Special Education Disconnect.** Federal special education funds are administered by state departments of education. A new state agency may not be able to take on this role, fragmenting preschool services for children with special needs. A new agency may also complicate transitions between early childhood and K-12 education services.
- ✗ **Age Complications.** Some existing programs that could be moved into a new agency have age eligibility that extends beyond early childhood. For instance, CCCAP can serve children from birth through age 12.



THE FUTURE OF PRESCHOOL IN COLORADO | BRIEF 3 OF 7

Funding Considerations

This brief examines how funding for preschool might flow from the state to preschool programs and how money might be divided across different types of preschool programs and regions of the state.

When talking about funding preschool, there are two key considerations:
funding allocation and *funding adequacy*.

FUNDING ALLOCATION: Who receives funds (e.g., counties, school districts, families), how much is distributed, and what determines funding amounts

FUNDING ADEQUACY: Ability of funds to meet learning and quality goals

National Funding Landscape

The per-child cost of universal preschool is influenced by the length of school day and year, teacher salaries, program settings, and other factors. Annual state spending ranges from approximately \$2,000 to over \$18,000 per child, with a national average of \$5,374 per child.¹

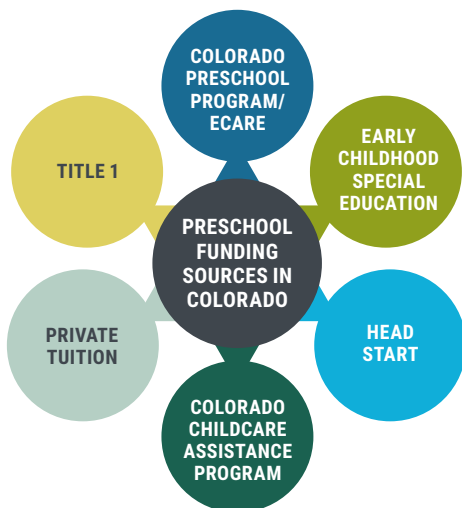
STATES WITH AT LEAST 50% OF 4-YEAR-OLDS ENROLLED IN UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL (2019)

STATE	SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED	MINIMUM HOURS OF OPERATION PER WEEK	OPERATION SCHEDULE	% OF 4-YEAR-OLDS ENROLLED
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	\$18,669	32.5	School or academic year	87%
WEST VIRGINIA	\$7,316	25.0	School or academic year	59%
NEW YORK	\$6,668	12.5	School or academic year	54%
GEORGIA	\$4,539	32.5	School or academic year	60%
OKLAHOMA	\$4,264	12.5	School or academic year	76%
WISCONSIN	\$3,321	12.5	Determined locally	72%
IOWA	\$3,295	10.0	School or academic year	64%
FLORIDA	\$2,253	Determined locally	Determined locally	75%
VERMONT	Not reported	10.0	School or academic year	78%

Source: 2019 State of Preschool Yearbook (NIEER).

1 Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G. G. & Gardiner, B. A. (2020). *The State of Preschool 2019: State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

At the program level, the cost of delivering preschool services depends on class size, teacher qualifications, salaries and benefits, length of school day and year, curriculum and assessments used, professional development offered, rent, and utilities. These costs can be shared between state and local school districts, and sometimes include a required family contribution.



Source: Colorado Preschool Program Legislative Report 2021

Colorado Funding Landscape

Several funding sources may help pay for preschool for children in Colorado, including:

- Preschool Special Education Services, for children with learning and development challenges
- Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), which serves children who meet specific risk criteria, such as low income, poor social skills, language delays, and homelessness

In 2019, Colorado spent \$2,787 per child enrolled in CPP.² The program is required to provide an average of 10 hours of programming per week.³

CPP funding comes mainly from the state school funding formula at half the rate of funding for a K-12 student. State General Fund Appropriations and local dollars also contribute.

Colorado's preschool funding can be complex. Blending and braiding of funds is used to combine dollars from different funding sources to pay for early care and learning services.

Blending combines sources to fund a specific set of program services for a group of children.

Braiding coordinates multiple funding sources to support the total cost of services for individual children.⁴

Stakeholder Input on Colorado's Funding Landscape

Stakeholders and community members identified several benefits and challenges of Colorado's current approach to funding preschool. Common themes from the Future of Preschool in Colorado engagement process are included here.

BENEFITS

Blended Funding. Early care and learning programs can combine funds from different sources to create programming options to meet the needs of families. Drawing from a large pool of funding sources also improves program sustainability.

Special Education. Colorado is a recognized national leader for its high rate of inclusive preschool settings.

Predictability. CPP and Preschool Special Education funds are fairly predictable sources for programs that receive them. This results in stable enrollment and financial sustainability.

CHALLENGES

Inadequate Funding. There is not enough money to meet the needs of all children and families who want to access early learning. Inadequate funding results in preschool educators being compensated at rates well below their K-12 peers.

Complexity. Colorado's early childhood funding system puts the burden on programs to manage the braiding and blending of funding streams. This takes time and staffing capacity away from service delivery and increases operational costs.

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2 Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G. G. & Gardiner, B. A. (2020). *The State of Preschool 2019: State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

3 CPP Act requires 360 contact hours per year or approximately 10 hours per week.

Program Requirements. (2020, October 15). Colorado Department of Education. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/cpphandbook-programrequirements>

4 Wallen, M. & Hubbard A. (2013) *Blending and Braiding Early Childhood Funding Streams Toolkit*. Chicago, IL: The Ounce of Prevention Fund.

Stakeholder Input on Possible Funding Models

The flow of money from the state to school- and community-based universal preschool programs can take several different forms:⁵

Model 1: Funding flows through school districts to school- and community-based sites.

Model 2: Some funding flows directly to school districts to serve specific populations and some goes from a state agency to both school- and community-based providers to achieve universal access.

Model 3: Funding flows through a community or regional intermediary organization to school- and community-based sites.

Participants in the Future of Preschool engagement process identified potential pros and cons for each model.



1

SCHOOL DISTRICT INTERMEDIARY

State Agency

School District

Community-Based

School Districts

PROS

- ✓ **Familiarity.** This model is currently used to administer CPP. The infrastructure to distribute funds and manage oversight activities already exists.
- ✓ **School-Community Relationships.** This model encourages relationship-building between school districts and community-based programs. Where strong relationships exist, it can benefit all involved, including families.

CONS

- ✗ **District-Community Inequity.** Most CPP slots are currently allocated to school districts, with 24% going to community-based and Head Start programs.⁶ There is concern that this may not be a fair distribution of funds across program types.
- ✗ **Inconsistency.** School districts vary in how they administer public preschool funding, causing disparities in program eligibility and accessibility for families.
- ✗ **Disconnection from Early Childhood System.** The early care and education system relies on more cost-effective preschool services to support the delivery and availability of services for infants and toddlers. Tying universal preschool closely to the K-12 education system may weaken the overall system.
- ✗ **Limited Choice.** If the ratio of school- to community-based programs were to favor school districts, families may not have access to universal preschool services in preferred settings.

⁵ Workman, S. (Nov. 20, 2020). *Preschool Funding Considerations* [PowerPoint slides]. Note: Workman presented four models, two of which were merged into one for this brief to reflect the similarity of these models to each other and the likeness of the resulting feedback.

⁶ Colorado Department of Education (2021). Colorado Preschool Program Legislative Report 2021.

PROS

- ✓ **Eases School District Burden.** Under CPP, school districts manage provider participation and quality. This model removes that burden from districts so they can focus on their own preschool programming.
- ✓ **School-Community Equity.** This model gives districts a clear role with targeted preschool and balances school and community access to universal program delivery.
- ✓ **Family Choice.** If community-based programs participate at high levels, families will have a broader choice of program types.

- ✓ **Coordination of Targeted Education Funding Streams.** CPP and Preschool Special Education currently flow from the education department to school districts. This model would leverage that existing infrastructure for targeted universal preschool services.

CONS

- ✗ **State Role Misfit.** It may be hard for a state agency to develop strong relationships with the large number of school- and community-based programs across the state. This may lead to uneven and unequal support across the system. A state agency also may not have the flexibility to meet community-specific needs.

- ✗ **Limited Support Infrastructure.** A state agency may not have the existing infrastructure to coordinate with and develop small preschool providers. Creating this capacity may be costly and take a long time.
- ✗ **Weakened Local Role.** Programs that trust and rely on existing relationships with local organizations may be less likely to engage with a state agency.
- ✗ **Agency Competition/Funding Fragmentation.** By splitting funding into a targeted and universal stream, this model may further complicate coordination between funding streams. It may also create tension in agency relationships if the streams are not managed by a single state department.

PROS

- ✓ **District-Community Equity.** Moving school districts from the role of funder to grantee puts school- and community-based programs on equal footing.
- ✓ **Community Orientation.** Intermediaries would be part of the communities they serve and may best understand local needs and opportunities. This model can build on the strengths and relationships of local organizations.
- ✓ **Program Collaborations.** Intermediaries can build collaborations between small and large programs and between school and community settings.

- ✓ **Nimble.** An intermediary that sits outside of state government may be more responsive and flexible in operations and creative in managing resources.

CONS

- ✗ **Administrative Costs.** Intermediaries may take money away from direct services to fund the administrative infrastructure.
- ✗ **District-Community Imbalance.** Inequity between school- and community-based programs could still exist.
- ✗ **Intermediary Capacity/Expertise.** Intermediaries may not have the infrastructure to manage oversight responsibilities or the expertise for specialty services (e.g., professional development, special education identification).

- ✗ **Inconsistent Implementation.** Intermediaries may differ in how they select programs, provide support, distribute funding, and engage partners. Some may have more expertise or capacity than others, which could lead to inconsistent results and unfair access for providers and families.
- ✗ **Complex Oversight.** State management of intermediaries with very different structures, skills, and capacity may be hard. The state agency in charge of universal preschool may need to develop a strong intermediary support system to address varying needs across the state.





THE FUTURE OF PRESCHOOL IN COLORADO | BRIEF 4 OF 7

Workforce

Colorado's early care and education (ECE) industry faces challenges with recruiting, retaining, and properly incentivizing a qualified workforce. The field's annual turnover rate is four times greater than among elementary school teachers. Low pay, poor working conditions, and the high cost of entry into the field all contribute to workforce shortages. COVID-19 has only worsened this issue with furloughs,

layoffs, and increases in educator stress that left many wondering if continuing in the field was worth it.

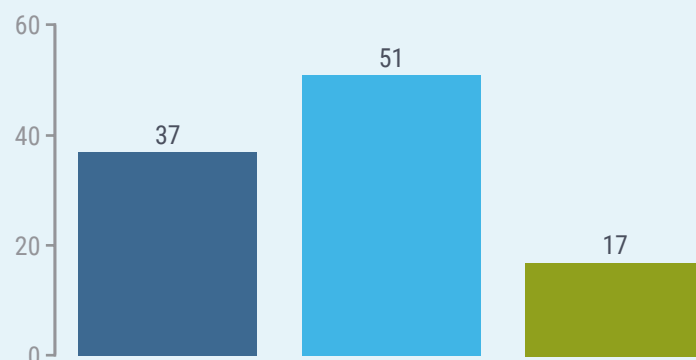
As preschool expands in Colorado, stakeholders worry educators may not have the right education, experience, or compensation to serve all eligible children.

National & Colorado Landscape

Standards for early childhood educators differ across the United States, with many states balancing requirements for specific degrees with the reality of low wages across the field. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) recommends a set of benchmarks that produce quality preschool experiences, including standards for teacher education and professional development. Low pay results in high turnover of the workforce and an ongoing need to train and educate new teacher to enter the field.

NATIONAL EDUCATOR CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS (N=62)

Education and training of early childhood educators is essential to quality programming. Requirements vary nationally, but most state preschool programs prioritize training in early childhood education.¹



- Lead teacher required to have bachelor's degree
- Teachers required to have training in early childhood development
- Assistant teacher must have CDA or equivalent

The following table shows teacher education, training, and compensation-related figures for states with over 50% preschool enrollment of 4-year-olds and for the Colorado Preschool Program.²

	REQUIREMENT/PRACTICE	NATIONAL SAMPLE (50% PRESCHOOL PARTICIPATION OR BETTTER) ¹	COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
LEAD TEACHER CREDENTIALS/TRAINING	Bachelor's degree	Required for all or some in each of the 9 states ³	Not required
	EC specialization, credential, or endorsement	Required in all 9 states ³	ECE credits in 4 areas
	Hours of annual professional development	At least 15 hours/year required by 7 states ³	15 hours (3 in social-emotional)
ASSISTANT TEACHER CREDENTIALS	High school diploma/GED	Minimum requirement in 3 states ³	Not required
	Child Development Associate	Minimum requirement in 4 states ³	Not required
IN-CLASS SUPPORT	Coaching or mentoring	Required by 4 states ⁴	Not required
PAY PARITY	Same starting salary and salary schedule as K-3 or K-12	Required in 7 states ⁴	Not required
LEAD TEACHER PAY	Median hourly wage	\$13.74 average ⁵	\$15.25 ⁶
	Range of median hourly wages	\$11.12 to \$18.02 ⁵	School or academic year ⁷

Stakeholder Input on Colorado's Approach

Stakeholders and community members identified several successes and challenges surrounding Colorado's early childhood workforce. Common themes from the Future of Preschool in Colorado engagement process are included here.



SUCCESSES

Diversity. Colorado has prioritized initiatives to build the racial and ethnic diversity of the early childhood workforce with targeted recruitment and other opportunities. This diversity is essential for providing quality, culturally responsive experiences for young children.

Doing Their Part. Early educators were essential to Colorado's pandemic response. Educators quickly adapted to new policies and student needs.

Professional Development and Pathways. The state Professional Development Information System (PDIS) serves as a valuable resource for educators, offering online classes, career navigation, and curriculum support. To date, PDIS has been used by over 77,000 early childhood professionals who have taken over 420,000 courses.⁸

FUTURE OF PRESCHOOL IN COLORADO ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

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CHALLENGES

Professional Recognition. Efforts to increase compensation contend with a perception that ECE professionals are less valuable or qualified than their K-12 peers. Early educators worry they will be asked to do more without recognition of the existing difficulty of their profession.

Recruitment & Retention. Colorado's various pathways to the field are complicated by education requirements and cost. Communities of color experience this at higher rates and are underrepresented in lead teacher and management positions. Lead teachers experience a 16% turnover rate, with greater frequency for assistant teachers (22%) and floaters (40%).⁹

Teacher Compensation. Average annual incomes for early childhood educators are close to the federal poverty level for a family of four and income for Colorado EC educators is close to minimum wage.^{10, 11} These low wages are a major factor in the shortage of early educators in Colorado, as well as the high turnover rates in the field.

HOT TOPIC: EDUCATOR QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

One of the most debated topics was teacher education requirements. Evidence suggests that children experience better educational and developmental outcomes when their teachers have a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early childhood¹², but unlike many states Colorado does not require early childhood teachers to have a bachelor's degree.

Stakeholders discussed the potential to elevate the workforce by requiring a bachelor's degree, but worried about creating additional burdens for an already stretched field. Suggested solutions included scholarships, forgivable loans, and commensurate pay increases to incentivize teachers to get a bachelor's degree before eventually requiring it for lead teachers.

Stakeholder Input for Supporting the Workforce

Through the engagement process, stakeholders and community members identified opportunities to support the workforce during this preschool expansion, as well as questions and potential negative consequences for decision-makers to consider.

OPPORTUNITIES

✓ Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Education.

Stakeholders emphasized the need for teachers who mirror the diversity of their communities, are trained in cultural competencies, and can be linguistically responsive to their students' needs.

✓ Capacity to Maintain Quality. NIEER recommends a staff-to-child ratio of 1:10 or better.¹³ Colorado will need more teachers to meet this suggestion as more children become eligible for preschool.

✓ **Continuing Education and Professional Development.** To maintain a qualified ECE workforce, all teachers, regardless of geographic location, will need access to mentoring, coaching, specialized courses, online training modules, and other professional development resources.

✓ **Compensation and Professional Parity.** Financial support from state, community, and business sources would promote parity between early educators and their K-12 peers. Retaining quality educators requires providing benefits such as health insurance, paid time off, planning time, and professional development.

CONCERNS

- ✗ **New Requirements & Alignment.** Requirements for program quality and educator credentials vary based on funding source and departmental oversight. New requirements for universal preschool may add to the confusion across programs and systems.
- ✗ **Equity.** Women of color make up over 40% of the early childhood workforce, but are disproportionately represented in assistant and substitute teacher roles. This results in average earnings of \$1.70 per hour less than white peers.¹⁴ Such disadvantages may continue without targeted education and training opportunities.
- ✗ **Affordability vs. Quality.** Parents and providers may be unable to shoulder the increased cost of maintaining quality programs, given narrow margins already experienced across the sector.
- ✗ **Capacity.** Colorado does not have enough educators to serve all of the 4-year-olds who would be included in the expanded preschool program. Existing recruitment and retention efforts may not be enough.
- ✗ **Family Child Care Homes.** More than half of the state's three- and four-year-olds are served in family child care homes, which can be well-suited to meeting the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse families. Many family child care home providers and educators are concerned that they will be left out of a statewide preschool initiative and that families will be negatively impacted.

NOTES

¹ Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G. G. & Gardiner, B. A. (2020). The State of Preschool 2019: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

² NY, GA, VT, WV, IA, FL, OK, WI, and DC

³ Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G. G. & Gardiner, B. A. (2020). The State of Preschool 2019: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

⁴ Weisenfeld, G.G., Frede, E., & Barnett, W.S. (2018). Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality pre-k: an updated scan of state policies. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

⁵ Whitebook, M., Austin, L.J.E., & Amanta, F. (2015). Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2018. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

⁶ LMI Gateway: Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education (does not include workforce classified as child care workers)

⁷ LMI Gateway: Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education 10th percentile-90th percentile

⁸ Colorado Department of Education (2017). Colorado Shines.

⁹ Early Milestones Colorado. (2020, February 4). Colorado's early childhood education workforce. Denver: Early Milestones Colorado.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Economic Policy Institute. (2020, October). Child care costs in the United States - Colorado. Economic Policy Institute.

¹² Lin, Y. & Magnuson K. (2018). Classroom quality and children's academic skills in child care centers: understanding the role of teacher qualifications. Early Childhood Research Quarterly. 42 (1) 215-227 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.10.003>

¹³ Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G. G. & Gardiner, B. A. (2020). The State of Preschool 2019: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

¹⁴ Whitebook, M., Austin, L.J.E., Edward, B., & Chavez, R. (2019). Racial Wage Gaps in Early Education Employment. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

Participation

Participation refers to which children and providers are eligible to enroll in or offer services as part of Colorado’s universal preschool program. Though all 4-year-olds may be eligible to enroll, some are unable to participate because of geographic constraints or diversity of available providers. Upcoming decisions about expanded preschool, such as eligibility of program types (e.g., centers, family child care homes) may also impact provider participation. This brief explores factors that may affect child and provider participation in universal preschool.

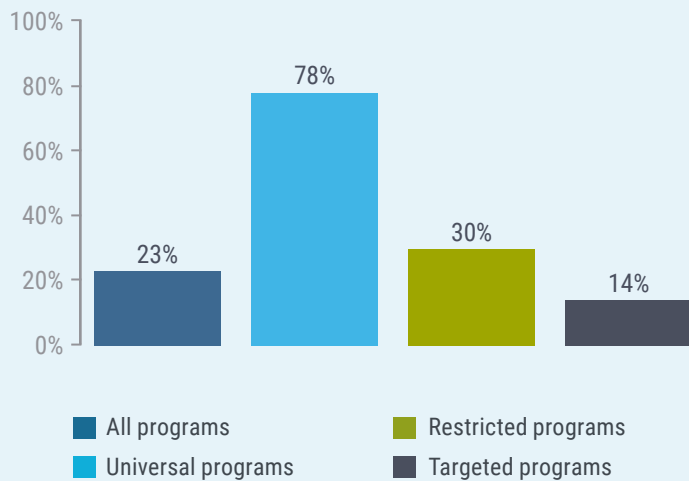
National Landscape

States with publicly-funded preschool programs have common eligibility criteria. The criteria for children typically focus on age and eligibility for kindergarten, while the provider criteria focus on licensing status and ability to meet guidelines and standards.

Universal preschool programs typically do not have income or “risk factor” criteria for child eligibility, while **targeted** programs do. Some programs are meant to be universal, but enrollment has been **restricted** by funding limitations or other external factors. Enrollment or participation in these programs varies considerably.

CHILDREN		PROVIDERS	
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 or 4 years old at the start of the school year Ineligible for kindergarten 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certification of child eligibility by lead agencies, school districts, or programs Proof of age (birth certificate or other documents) and residency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed or accredited Ability to meet state program guidelines and/or early learning standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodic (1 to 3 years) competitive funding applications Selection by state governing agency

PERCENT OF FOUR-YEAR-OLDS ENROLLED, NATIONAL AVERAGES¹



Early Milestones has adopted the following definitions:

UNIVERSAL: Available to all age-eligible children in applicable geographic area and funded for all who enroll OR systematic progress toward full availability and funding

TARGETED: Available to children who meet certain criteria, often income level and/or academic risk factors

RESTRICTED: No income or risk criteria, but universal access is limited by funding or other implementation factors

Colorado Landscape

Colorado currently has two publicly funded preschool programs: the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) and Head Start. These targeted programs serve children who need extra support before entering kindergarten. In 2019, 23% of all 4-year-olds in Colorado were enrolled in CPP. Provider eligibility to offer services for these programs varies, but focuses on the ability to provide the type or level of services required by program standards and guidelines.

	CHILDREN		PROVIDERS	
	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS
COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROGRAM (CPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-year-olds meeting 3 of 10 family risk factors 4- or 5-year-olds meeting 1 of 10 family risk factors Ineligible for kindergarten 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School districts certify eligibility May include: family interviews, developmental, vision and/or hearing screenings, and referrals from partner agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed school- or community-based preschools or centers Ability to approximate CDE Quality Standards for Early Childhood Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodic funding applications Selection by school districts/district advisory councils
HEAD START	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 or 4 years old Family income, use of public assistance, and/or homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Head Start programs certify eligibility Proof of age (birth certificate or other documents), residency, and household income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public, private, nonprofit, or for-profit Center- or home-based Able to deliver full range of Head Start services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grantee agencies apply through competitive federal application Grantees select local programs

¹ Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G. G. & Gardiner, B. A. (2020). The State of Preschool 2019: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Stakeholder Input on Participation

Stakeholders and community members identified several successes and challenges for ensuring participation in expanded preschool. Common themes from the Future of Preschool in Colorado engagement process are included here.

PROVIDER PARTICIPATION

Mixed Delivery. Colorado's early care and learning system includes programs within public schools, child care centers, family child care homes, and stand-alone preschools. Stakeholders emphasized the need for funding that encourages the participation of all program types. This might include strategies that equitably distribute funds across program types or the creation of reimbursement methods that minimize administrative burdens. (See Brief 3: Funding.)

Misalignment of Funding & Standards. Many programs do not currently participate in publicly funded programs such as the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program or the Colorado Preschool Program. This is partly due to the difficulty of piecing together budgets and meeting varying requirements of different public funding streams. State-level alignment of funding streams and program requirements may encourage participation in universal preschool and other public funding programs as well.

Rules & Program Requirements. Stakeholders are concerned that universal preschool will be burdened by too many rules and regulations, low reimbursements, and too much paperwork. Streamlining and simplifying rules and processes is likely to be a key factor in encouraging providers to deliver universal preschool across the state.

CHILD PARTICIPATION

Family Choice. Most families need full-time care, and many want services that are culturally aligned and convenient. Services offered in a variety of settings (e.g., centers, schools, family child care homes) and that have cultural, linguistic, and special education capacities are more likely to meet the diverse needs of all families. Wrap-around care and transportation between preschool and child care settings are also likely to boost participation.

Language Diversity. Stakeholders identified the lack of language and cultural diversity within preschools as a concern. To ensure equitable enrollment in the program, diverse language families may need targeted recruitment efforts, and the state should explore solutions to increase access to diverse language preschool providers.

Rural Communities & Preschool Deserts. About 38% of Colorado's zip codes are classified as child care deserts.² As a result, many families in Colorado have limited access to preschool options. For these communities, participation will depend on building a supply of quality preschool options, supporting transportation solutions for families, and offering business development assistance for providers.

Access & Navigation. Families often struggle to find high quality preschools and navigate systems that are supposed to provide information and services. Simplified mechanisms for finding and enrolling in services may boost child participation. This could include enhanced resource and referral systems, streamlined application processes, and preschool navigators.

MIXED DELIVERY: Offering of early care and learning services by different types of providers, including both public school and community-based settings. *Mixed delivery* can also refer to different types of community settings, including centers, stand-alone preschools, and family child care homes.

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² Malk, R., et al. (2016, October 27). Child Care Deserts: Analysis of Child Care Centers by ZIP Code in 8 States. Center for American Progress.



EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO

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VISIT EARLYMILESTONES.ORG/FUTUREOFPRESCHOOL FOR MORE INFORMATION

THE FUTURE OF PRESCHOOL IN COLORADO | BRIEF 5 OF 7

Program Quality & Standards

To best prepare all children for kindergarten, universal preschool must commit to evidence-based quality standards and continuous improvement. This brief compares Colorado's quality standards with national trends and offers input from statewide stakeholders.

National & Colorado Landscape

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) offer guidance on quality standards that encourage positive outcomes for children, including teacher education levels, developmentally appropriate curriculum, adult-child ratios, and family engagement.¹

STANDARD	NATIONAL SAMPLE (50% PRESCHOOL PARTICIPATION OR BETTER) ²	COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROGRAM (CPP)
COMPREHENSIVE, ALIGNED, SUPPORTIVE, & CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS	All 9 states meet or partially meet standard	Comprehensive and aligned
MAXIMUM CLASS SIZE: 20 STAFF-TO-CHILD RATIO OF 1:10 OR BETTER	6 states meet or partially meet this standard	Maximum class size: 16 Staff-to-child ratio of 1:8
LEAD TEACHER HAS A BACHELOR'S DEGREE & SPECIALIZED TRAINING IN ECE	5 states meet or partially meet this standard	Bachelor's degree not required ECE coursework required for lead teachers
TEACHER COMPENSATION ON PAR WITH K-12	6 states meet or partially meet this standard	Not required at state level Required by some districts
STRUCTURED CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS & DATA-SUPPORTED CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT	7 states meet or partially meet this standard	Classroom observation used to inform improvement and QRIS rating
COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT	Encouraged in all 9 states	Encouraged
SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	All 9 states meet or partially meet standard	Required

¹ Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G. G. & Gardiner, B. A. (2020). The State of Preschool 2019: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

² NY, GA, VT, WV, IA, FL, OK, WI, and DC

Stakeholder Input on Colorado's Current Approach

Stakeholders and community members identified several quality-related successes and challenges for current Colorado preschool programs. Common themes from the Future of Preschool in Colorado engagement process are included.

SUCCESSES

Group Sizes and Ratios. NIEER recommends a maximum class size of 20 and a staff-to-child ratio of 1:10 or better for preschool classrooms.² Colorado's maximum class size is 16, and CPP's staff-to-child ratio is 1:8.

Comprehensive Early Learning Standards. The Colorado Department of Education developed a set of comprehensive standards to guide quality and developmentally appropriate learning.

Professional Development & Training. Colorado's Professional Development Information System allows educators to participate in professional development online, map out career trajectories, and receive support for continued learning.

Inclusive Classrooms. Most children with disabilities are served in inclusive classrooms with developmentally appropriate support. Colorado has a well-supported screening and referral network and targeted funding for children with special needs.

CHALLENGES

Educator Compensation. Well-trained, committed, and professional educators are essential to a quality preschool program. Low wages, a lack of benefits, and high turnover rates threaten the stability and motivation educators need to provide quality instruction or to even enter or remain in the field.

Per Student Spending. Colorado spent \$2,787 per child enrolled in CPP in 2019, well below the national average of \$5,374 per child.³ While this amount may be supplemented somewhat with local funding, Colorado's spending is still well below those states that enroll 50% or more of their 4-year-olds in a state preschool program.

Defining Quality. Colorado Shines offers families a standardized rating system to identify quality programs. However, some stakeholders are concerned that quality measures may not apply equally to all programs, such as family child care homes and rural programs.

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⁴ Ibid.



Stakeholder Input for Universal Preschool Quality Standards

Through the engagement process, stakeholders and community members identified opportunities and concerns around preschool quality standards for decision-makers to consider.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ **Funding High Quality.** Stakeholders hope funding will match the increased focus on preschool quality. This includes improved compensation and training for educators to better support the diverse needs of children. Funding should emphasize support for dual language learners and students with special needs.
- ✓ **Mixed Delivery.** Colorado children are currently served in a variety of settings, including family child care homes, community-based centers, and school district programs. Coordination by state program administrators will be needed to provide seamless and comprehensive opportunities across all settings.
- ✓ **Alignment.** The most successful programs effectively align standards and provide curriculum and implementation supports so that all children receive the same quality education regardless of setting.

CONCERNS

- ✗ **Affordability.** There is not currently enough funding to serve all children in high-quality environments. Colorado will need to increase funding and maintain quality without passing the cost on to providers or families.
- ✗ **Educator Burden.** Research shows a correlation between teacher education level and positive child outcomes.⁵ At the same time, there is concern that requiring a bachelor's degree may hamper efforts to attract and retain early educators, especially those who have historically experienced less access to higher education.
- ✗ **Local Choice and Local Control.** Aligning standards for a statewide program in a way that respects the local needs of Colorado's 64 counties and 179 school districts will require considerable engagement and input.

⁵ Lin, Y. & Magnuson K. (2018). Classroom quality and children's academic skills in child care centers: understanding the role of teacher qualifications. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 42 (1) 215-227



THE FUTURE OF PRESCHOOL IN COLORADO | BRIEF 7 OF 7

Community Voices

Universal preschool will be implemented at the local level across the state. Stakeholders who deliver preschool, use preschool services, and support the early care and learning system weighed in on potential opportunities and concerns for Colorado's upcoming preschool expansion. Between October 2020 and April 2021, 47 organizations across the state held 61 listening sessions to gather the thoughts from those they serve. Their input is summarized and reflected in this brief.

Colorado Landscape

Colorado's early care and learning system is complex. Roughly 2,200 licensed centers and preschools have the capacity to serve preschool-age children (3 to 5 years old prior to kindergarten entry), and approximately 1,475 family child care homes are licensed to serve children of mixed ages.¹

34 Early Childhood Councils support the sector and are made up of providers and

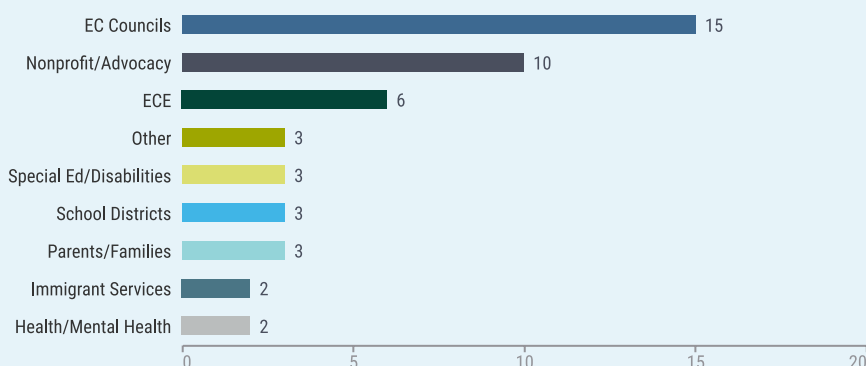
other local system partners. Depending on population density, some Councils serve a single county, while others serve larger regions. Other local and statewide organizations also support the industry through related services, membership support, and advocacy.

During the Future of Preschool in Colorado Engagement Process, nearly half of the Early Childhood Councils gathered stakeholders to provide input. Eight statewide and two local organizations also held listening sessions. Stakeholders included

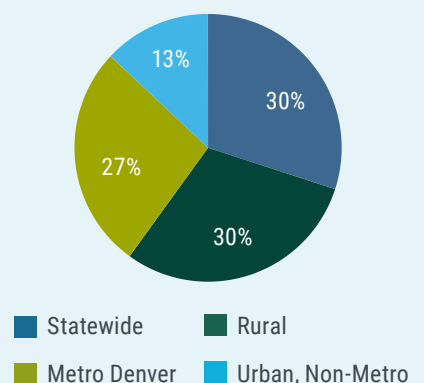
individual early care and learning programs, local child care associations, school district partners, special education and disability interests, family-serving organizations, immigrant services, health/mental health partners, educators, and families.

Almost one-third of stakeholders came from rural communities and another quarter were from Metro Denver. Other non-metro urban areas were also represented. Statewide interests (primarily nonprofit or advocacy organizations) also participated.

AFFILIATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS LEADING INPUT SESSIONS (N=47)



SERVICE AREAS FOR ORGANIZATIONS LEADING INPUT SESSIONS (N=47)



¹ Licensing data from Office of Early Childhood (pulled March 24, 2021)

Stakeholder Input

The themes reflected here are based on a synthesis of all community input. These are the most commonly mentioned hopes, goals, and fears voiced by stakeholders across the state as they look to the launch of universal preschool in 2023.

OPPORTUNITIES

Kindergarten Readiness. Stakeholders see universal preschool as an opportunity to help children develop skills and behaviors that will help them once they enter the K-12 system. This includes pre-literacy, getting used to routines, learning to follow directions, and practicing self-regulation.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices. Preschool settings should focus on the whole child and encourage learning through play and social interactions. This supports each child's cognitive development, problem solving, independence, and self-confidence.

Social-Emotional Development. A key goal for universal preschool is that it will help children learn to manage emotions, make friends, develop a sense of self, and learn how to get along with others.

Access. Families need preschool services that meet a diversity of needs, including for those parents who work full-time or non-traditional hours. The system must also be easy to navigate. Participants are eager to see an overall increase in the supply of quality preschool settings, especially for under-resourced and rural communities.

Culture and Equity. An effective universal preschool program will reflect and support families of all languages and cultures.

Affordability. Universal preschool can bring families into the early learning system who otherwise would not be able to afford it. Stakeholders want to ensure that access is improved through reduction of financial strain and other economic barriers.

Special Education/Inclusion. Stakeholders hope the new system will support earlier Child Find evaluations and seamlessly deliver needed special education or early intervention services.

Family Supports. Stakeholders envision a family-centered universal preschool program. This includes promoting family choice for preschool settings, engaging families in decision making, and offering tools to support learning at home. A successful program will connect families with resources that support health, mental health, nutrition, housing, and transportation.

Workforce Training. A highly trained workforce is central to the development of a strong universal preschool program. Professional development, including cultural and linguistic training, should be a core goal for the program and help professionalize the perception of field.

Use of Funds. Participants hope to see funding support teacher compensation, additional paraprofessionals, and reimbursement for school and community settings that covers actual costs.



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CONCERNS

Transportation. Families can only participate in universal preschool if they can get to it. If preschool settings do not offer full-day care options, children will need to be transported between preschool and other care. Families in rural areas and those who have children with disabilities are especially impacted by transportation shortages.

Equitable Access. Universal preschool must ensure that families of all races, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, and geographies can easily access quality programs within a variety settings. Otherwise, many families will continue to be left out of the state's early learning system.

Special Education. An expanded preschool system will likely uncover more needs for special education and early intervention services. Stakeholders worry that existing staffing capacity is insufficient and a larger mixed delivery system will stretch already thin resources.

Insufficient Hours. Ten hours of preschool per week is not enough to meet most families' needs. Families who require more hours will need affordable, accessible, and convenient wrap-around care options.

Facility Constraints. There is not currently enough space within existing facilities to provide services to all the children who might be eligible. There are also not enough appropriate facilities in many communities to create new preschool programs. This is a particular concern in rural areas and child care deserts.

Administration. Experiences with existing funding programs in Colorado have many stakeholders worried they will be left out or underfunded by the administration of a new universal preschool program. They want this program to operate differently, but fear similar administrative challenges will remain.

Unintended Impacts. Increased funding for preschool could draw resources away from the care of infants and toddlers. Infant and toddler services are far more costly, and providers rely on preschool revenue to sustain them. Family child care homes and family, friend, and neighbor providers are concerned that universal preschool will primarily be located in school and center settings, driving them out of business.

51% of Coloradans live in a child care desert.

A child care desert is any census tract containing more than 50 children under age 5, but either no licensed providers or so few that there are three times as many children as licensed child care slots.

Special Education. An expanded preschool system will likely uncover more needs for special education and early intervention services. Stakeholders worry that existing staffing capacity is insufficient and a larger mixed delivery system will stretch already thin resources.

Workforce. There are not enough qualified educators to meet the needs of Colorado's existing early care and learning sector. Stakeholders expect the shortage to worsen with the launch of universal preschool. Qualified infant and toddler teachers may migrate to preschool, which would cause greater shortages for that age group. Pay for early educators needs to be addressed, so that compensation disparities are not worsened.



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