

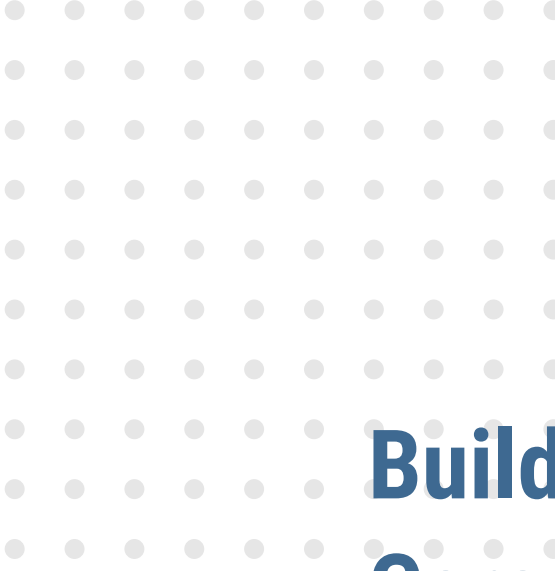


Building an Equitable Early Care and Learning System in Colorado

CASE STUDIES



EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO



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CASE STUDIES

Prepared for
Early Milestones Colorado

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Introduction

An equity-driven universal preschool program in Colorado should work for all families and consider the unique needs of historically marginalized and minoritized communities. To inform the development of an equitable program, Early Milestones Colorado (Early Milestones) utilized a case study approach focused on the preschool and childcare needs of different family types.

The goals of this research were to:

1. Understand how different families in Colorado viewed preschool, and what they wanted from that experience.
2. Identify barriers to access to Colorado’s universal preschool program.
3. Learn how parents and program directors have engaged with the rollout of Colorado’s universal preschool program.

Early Milestones interviewed Black or African American families in Aurora about their experiences finding child care, choosing preschools for their 3- or 4-year-old children, and their general thoughts about quality early learning.

Families described struggles in finding child care starting when their children were infants and wishing for more convenient preschool options. They also shared how changes in the cost of living and increased housing costs had impacted their ability to live in areas that affirmed their racial and ethnic identity. This created tensions between wanting culturally responsive learning environments for their children and logistical barriers such as transportation and access to county-specific assistance programs. Finally, families presented their perspectives on quality preschool programming and what they hoped their children would learn before entering kindergarten.

Major themes and survey results are presented below. All names are pseudonyms, and certain details have been amended where necessary for privacy purposes.

Pseudonym	Annual Household Income	Number of Children	Marital Status
Adam	\$75,000 - \$99,999	2	Married
Brittany	\$50,000 - \$74,999	5	Married
Arlene	Under \$25,000	4	Single
Andrea	Under \$25,000	1	Single
Nina	\$100,000 - \$149,999	2	Married
Helen	Under \$25,000	4	Single
Mercedes	Under \$25,000	2	Single

Table 1. Parent Characteristics

Access and Affordability

Child care costs are high, and parents struggle to find care, especially when they rely on assistance.

Child care costs were a significant concern for participants, and many relied on reduced fees through the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) to afford care for their children. **Andrea**, a mother of one daughter who had just turned four, paid \$6 per month for child care as she is currently unemployed. When she last worked, her parent fees were \$110 a month with CCCAP. She said it was initially difficult to get approved for CCCAP but that she was extremely grateful to have it.

“When I had a job, I was paying, I think, like \$110, and that was fair. It could have been a lot worse. [Without CCCAP], they base it off the age of the kid. So [for my daughter] for a week would've been \$200 something. So, to me, that was like, “Whoa.” I just appreciate CCAP because daycare is truly expensive.”

Without CCCAP, Andrea would have been unable to afford child care for her daughter. As a single mother who struggles with mental health, the time her daughter is in school allows Andrea to apply for jobs, look for more stable housing, and complete household chores.

While grateful for the assistance, parents who received CCCAP struggled to find child care programs that accepted CCCAP and had availability. To find a spot for her daughter, Andrea spent a day being driven around by a family member to look for nearby programs. She experienced a lack of options, “It was very hard to find [availability]. I think in total, I only found maybe five or six places that take CCCAP.”

Mercedes, a single mother of two, had similar issues finding care for her 3-year-old son. “The lady at the CCAP office gave me a list of daycares that were close to me. When I called them, this was the only one that had availability for his age group.”

Despite a lack of choice, most participants were satisfied with the care they were able to secure. However, some felt constrained by costs and the need to find care that would accept CCCAP. **Arlene**, a single mother of four, found the process of getting approved for CCCAP difficult and felt rushed to make a decision.

“The building was almost condemned, and it was hot. They didn't have air conditioning. I took him there because I had to, it was close. I wasn't mobile. I was a single parent and they had openings. My CCCAP was going to go away, I just got approved. And they're real quick. They're like, if you don't get back to us within the week, you're done. So, I was kind of desperate.”

Of the 3,580 programs licensed to serve children from birth to five in Colorado, only 49% currently have fiscal agreements to accept CCCAP. In Aurora specifically, the percentage of licensed programs accepting

CCCAP is just over half.¹ Many programs prefer to balance their CCCAP and private pay families for financial reasons and to minimize hassle.² The cost of quality child care is high and reimbursement rates generally do not cover the full cost of running a quality program.³ This and a lack of state and federal investment in child care leaves providers and families in precarious situations.

For families not receiving CCCAP, finding care for their children was still a difficult and frustrating process. At the time of the interview, **Nina**, a mother of two including a 3-year-old and an infant, was bringing her infant daughter to work with her because she was unable to find infant child care. Her son attended a center 20 minutes from her home, but the center had no openings for infants.

“They have a wait list that’s over a year long. And so right now, she comes to work with me, which I’m grateful to have a boss that allows that, but it’s also super stressful to work with an infant by my side.”

Even if there was availability, sending both children to the same center was out of reach for Nina’s family. As a married couple with two incomes, Nina and her spouse do not qualify for any childcare assistance, and the center her son attends has already decided they will not be participating in universal preschool. As a result, the out-of-pocket costs for two children are high.

“We can’t afford to have both of them in school. That would be more than we could afford. It would be closer to \$2,500 a month if she were to go to school where he goes to school.”

Because of this, Nina hopes her son can qualify for full-day preschool hours at the public elementary school near their home. This would free up funds for her daughter to attend a large child care center nearby that only had a six-month waiting list. Participant families often viewed the preschool funding as an additional subsidy on top of existing child care assistance and were happy to have less restrictive assistance sources.

Child care costs in Colorado are high, and near the costliest in the nation with an average annual cost of over \$16,000 for center-based care and \$11,000 for home-based care.⁴ This leaves most Colorado families burdened by care costs and paying well over 7% of their household income, the amount considered to be affordable by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.⁵

Additionally, according to an analysis by the Center for American Progress, 51% of Coloradans live in census tracts with either no licensed child care providers or less than one-third of the licensed child care slots needed for all children under five.⁶ Data on the shortage of child care for infants and toddlers is difficult to come by, but there is concern that the expected increase in

¹ Data Source: Colorado Department of Early Childhood. Colorado Licensed Child Care Facilities Report. Updated November 1, 2023. <https://data.colorado.gov/Early-childhood/Colorado-Licensed-Child-Care-Facilities-Report/a9rr-k8mu>

² Early Milestones Colorado. On the Business of Child Care: Provider Perspectives on CCCAP. 2020. <https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CCCAP-Brief-final.pdf>

³ Franko, M. (2022). Quality child care in Colorado: A Cost study. <https://www.bellpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/ECE-Brief2.pdf>

⁴ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2023). *2023 Kids Count Data Book: 2023 trends in child well-being*. Baltimore, MD. Retrieved from <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2023kidscountdatabook-2023.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-09-30/pdf/2016-22986.pdf>

⁶ Workman, S. & Jessen-Howard, S. (2019). Early Learning Factsheet 2019: Colorado. Center for American Progress. https://americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/Colorado.pdf?_ga=2.106615363.1511440696.1697833053-986564945.1697833053

availability and funding for 4-year-olds will have negative impacts on care for 3-year-olds and younger children.⁷

As the metro area becomes more expensive, families move to find affordable housing but struggle with child care resources that are restricted along county lines and result in long commutes.

Families with young children living in Denver can get up to \$1,200 in costs subsidized by the Denver Preschool Program (DPP).⁸ This is true even for higher-income families who do not qualify for other subsidies. While all participants currently live in Aurora, many previously lived in Denver, continue to work in Denver, and some continue to send their children to school in Denver. Some parents expressed unhappiness with the lack of similar resources in Aurora.

Brittany, a mother of five, had recently moved from a small low-income apartment in Denver where her family of seven shared two bedrooms, to a larger home in Aurora. While the move was good for her family, she worried about losing access to the DPP funds that kept her son in the preschool program at the Denver charter school her other children attended.

“[DPP is] another benefit that if you live in Denver you could have, but if you don’t, you can’t qualify just because you don’t live in Denver, even if you might financially need it. They’re telling me with UPK [Universal Preschool Colorado], I still have to pay \$700 a month if I don’t qualify for DPP. I did qualify, but I messed up and put my real address.”

Brittany, who works at a school in Denver close to the charter school, needs all her children at the same school for their schedule and transportation to work. She hopes the school can offer her a scholarship for her 4-year-old son to bridge the gap between this year’s tuition and next year

when he would get free full-day kindergarten like all Colorado children. If not, she will need to find an alternative school for just one of her children.

“I would have to try to find him another preschool and that would mean I can’t take him to school or pick him up, so I would have to rely on other family supports to do that, but that’s a burden on them.”

Like Brittany, **Helen**, a mother of four, would benefit from having all her children able to attend the same schools. She wants her youngest to attend preschool at the same school as her older children. Helen, also a single mother, spends over two hours a day driving between her children’s schools and the Community College of Aurora, where she is gaining additional healthcare certifications and improving her English language skills. Her older children are attached to their school, so having her youngest attend preschool there would save Helen over an hour of driving a day.

⁷ McGee, D., Delap, S., Nicolaou, K., & Franko M. (2022). Sustaining & Adapting During the Pandemic: Family & Provider Sentiments About Colorado’s Proposed Universal Pre-K Program. Denver, Colorado: Early Milestones Colorado.

⁸ https://dpp.org/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=adtaxi_search&gclid=CjwKCAjwysipBhBXEiwApJOcu7L9PZhT2vCb49013ko26nFDT9_TtsE6qgBMuDUSVZD-uCnHH8bh2xoCC9wQAvD_BwE

Long commutes for school and child care were a common theme for participants. Parents expressed wanting consistency for their children and were reticent to move their children from familiar care arrangements, even with changes to the family’s housing situation.

Mercedes, a single mother of two who recently moved back in with her parents, commutes via bus and spends up to 40 minutes each way getting her son to school and herself to work. Regarding her son’s center, she said, “At that time [when he was born], that was the only childcare that had availability. It’s a little bit farther than I would like.”

Since enrolling her son, Mercedes has moved twice and plans to move again soon. For preschool and kindergarten, she wants her

son to go to the same Aurora public elementary school as his sister. Enrolling him there would drastically reduce Mercedes’ time on the bus and allow family members to help with picking up both children.

Researchers have found high degrees of housing instability, dissatisfaction, and forced moves among low-income households, especially low-income single mothers.⁹ With the Denver-Metro area’s rising housing costs, many low-income families living in currently affordable areas such as Aurora and Northeast Denver — areas that are home to much of Colorado’s Black population — are at risk of displacement.¹⁰ Efforts that tie affordable housing to needed services such as child care in low-income areas can help families reduce commute times and gain stability.



⁹ Skobba, K. and Goetz, E.G. (2013) Mobility decisions of very low-income households. *Cityscape*, 15 (2) 155-172. <http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/cityscpe/vol15nu2/article11.html>

¹⁰ Chapple, K., & Thomas, T., and Zuk, M. (2021). Urban Displacement Project website. Berkeley, CA: Urban Displacement Project. <https://www.urbandisplacement.org/maps/denver-gentrification-and-displacement/>

Cultural Responsiveness and Diversity

Black and African American families seek diversity in their schools and neighborhoods and a sense of community but struggle to balance those needs with unequal resource distribution, gentrification, and affordability.

Implicit bias and racial stereotyping may unfairly attribute behavioral concerns to Black students and contribute to higher rates of preschool suspension and expulsion.¹¹ This occurs despite similar levels of both developmentally appropriate and challenging behaviors between Black students and their peers.¹² Research has also shown that Black students are less likely to be rated as having behavioral problems when their race matches that of their teacher.¹³ Additionally, early role models in the form of same-race teachers have been shown to positively impact the educational achievement of Black students.¹⁴

Wanting positive representation and fear of racial discrimination or stereotyping were important considerations for participants and led some to make specific choices around child care. **Adam**, a married father of two, moved to Colorado for work and settled in Aurora, in part, to find a greater sense of belonging for his family.

“Before we moved to Aurora, there were issues with skin color. So, I felt that when transferring [my children] to another school, I’ll give them a school and an environment where they’ll be seen as equals.”

Adam felt that being around other children of the same race and having positive role models with Black teachers has been crucial for his son’s development, **“He’s so much more free. He is getting to be the best version of himself around the people he is [with] because right now he can be comfortable.”**

Adam felt lucky to have found a neighborhood in Aurora with a high Black population. He enjoyed the sense of community his family had built with their neighbors and the school.

¹¹ Gilliam, W., Maupin, A., Reyes, C. R., Accavitti, M. & Shic, F. (2016). Do Early Educators’ Implicit Biases Regarding Sex and Race Relate to Behavior Expectations and Recommendations of Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions?. Yale University Child Study Center. <https://files-profile.medicine.yale.edu/documents/75afe6d2-e556-4794-bf8c-3cf105113b7c?sv=2020-08-04&se=2023-10-23T20%3A14%3A23Z&sr=b&sp=r&sig=KYsy%2FHBiJQl4b2bc502AIYjP2dtqUv3y8izKE9a6YhY%3D>

¹² Sabol, T. J., Kessler, C. L., Rogers, L. O., Petittler, A., Silver, J., Briggs-Gowan, M., & Wakschlag, L. S. (2022). A window into racial and socioeconomic status disparities in preschool disciplinary action using developmental methodology. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1508(1), 123–136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14687>

¹³ Downey, D. B., & Pribesh, S. (2004). When Race Matters: Teachers’ Evaluations of Students’ Classroom Behavior. *Sociology of Education*, 77(4), 267–282. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3649390>

¹⁴ Gershenson, S., Hart, C., Hyman, J., Lindsay, C. A., & Papageorge, N. W., (2022). The long-run impacts of same-race teachers. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 14 (4): 300-342.

Other participants expressed feeling the tension between wanting diversity in their neighborhoods and schools and the lack of school resources and perceived lack of neighborhood safety.

Brittany moved her family from a more diverse but lower-income neighborhood in Denver to a more affluent community in Aurora with mostly homeowners. While she appreciated her new neighborhood, she struggled with missing the sense of belonging her family had experienced before.

“I like that [the neighborhood] is kept clean. It’s pretty quiet and calm. But I don’t feel like we fit in. There’s only a couple of families in the area that look like us. And how it currently is, the kids go and play but the adults don’t really interact or support one another as neighbors. I wish there were more young people that could afford something like this. People with children. People that look like my kids to play with outside.”

For her children’s school and care, Brittany prioritizes belonging and positive role models over the convenience of having her children attend schools near their home.

“In every grade level, they have at least one Black teacher. And you can’t go to a lot of schools and say that. When I tell you about the administration, the principal is white, but I love her. And literally, aside from her, assistant principals, deans, you name it, pretty much everybody else is Black which I like because too often, there’s too much negative Black stuff in the media where it’s like Black people are doing negative things, but I want my kids to see and know that Black people can be successful.”

Along with the importance of role models, Brittany also felt a greater sense of comfort with Black educators whom she felt would be more understanding and more likely to look out for her children and not judge her. Brittany shares custody of her oldest child who goes to a predominately white school where only one other child shares their race and ethnic background. Brittany said she has noticed the difference when her oldest child attends school events for the younger children and spends time at the diverse school where Brittany teaches. “She’s been

just in the last six months starting to love her hair, and she’s been adjusting to loving herself since being around me and Black and African people.”

The value participants placed on racially affirming educational experiences for their children was evident. Many pointed to diverse school communities with Black representation among the staff and administration as a key factor in their choices.

Providers also expressed similar sentiments about diversity in schools where the staff and administration mirror the demographics of the children who attend. **Carrina**, a preschool program director who identifies as a woman of color, asserted the importance of representation.

“Children need to be able to find somebody that they can identify with. Being a woman of color, we don’t see that too often, especially in the classrooms. It doesn’t always mean that the struggles are the same, but there are some commonalities [with children of color]. There are some things that I can identify with that my colleagues may not.”

During the 2020-21 school year, only 5% of Colorado’s early care and education

workforce identified as Black,¹⁵ and finding schools with diverse staff has been difficult for families.

Nina chose Aurora for housing affordability and neighborhood diversity. Since having children, she has begun to feel the tension between wanting a neighborhood where her family fits in and wanting her children to have the best academic experience possible.

“I have a diverse neighborhood, but not a great school. And so, the conversation that my husband and I have often is the challenge between picking a home that we can afford and a diverse neighborhood with also a good school. I would love for [my son] to go to a school where he has leadership and teachers that look like him and more children that look like him. But I also would like to protect him and ensure that he has a great future in academics.”

Looking at the ratings for public schools in her neighborhood and the school district overall, Nina is worried about the education her children will receive once they enter K-

12 schooling. She has also been disappointed with the lack of nearby quality child care.

Carrina noted similar tensions and hoped that increased funding in early care and learning would allow more diverse schools serving Black families and schools in less affluent areas to incorporate some of the practices found in higher-income school communities.

“My goal is to bring those experiences that I had in those other demographics to the demographics in which I serve, that parent engagement, the opportunities to build community but also educate.”

Ensuring a culturally responsive learning environment for their children was incredibly important for participants. They hoped that the new universal preschool program would increase their ability to find schools where their children could feel that they belonged without sacrificing neighborhood safety or resources.

¹⁵ Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab. Colorado Early Care and Education Workforce Data Dashboard. <https://itablu.edu/views/CDECECEWorkforceDa>

shboard/Demographics?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestR
edirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aorigin=card_share_link

Considerations for Future Work

As a small portion of Colorado's population and one that has been historically marginalized, Black and African American families may be particularly impacted by failures to consider equity in the implementation of Colorado's new state-funded universal preschool program. Concerns around neighborhood gentrification, costs of care, and culturally responsive schools have emerged as important factors in how Black families search for, access, and choose educational opportunities for their children.

To ensure equity for Black families, we must prioritize reduced care costs and standardize available subsidies state-wide so that families are not forced to choose between affordable housing and necessary financial assistance. Colorado can also undertake additional research into the barriers to entry for Black and African American educators and efforts aimed at reducing racial bias in the classroom.



Appendix A

Methods

Recruitment and Sample

For the first phase of this research, we spoke to Black and African American families living in Aurora as well as preschool program directors in Aurora who served Black and African American families before and at the start of the inaugural 2023-24 cohort of universal preschool.

We recruited participants through email communications to listed preschool program staff on program websites, Facebook posts, and through community-based partner organizations such as early childhood councils, family resource centers, and child care centers. We compensated participants with a \$50 Target or Amazon gift card for their time.

The final sample includes seven parents of 3- or 4-year-old children living in Aurora (six mothers and one father), all identifying as Black or African American. The sample also includes three directors of preschool programs in the Aurora area that serve Black and African American families, including three directors, two Black, and one white.

Interviews and Data Analysis

We created two semi-structured interview guides, one for the parents and one for program directors. Each guide covered a range of topics, including family finances, previous child care arrangements, preparing the preschool program for preschool expansion, and cultural considerations.

Participants were given the option to participate via Zoom or by phone; all chose to participate via Zoom. Interviews were recorded in Zoom and transcribed verbatim using a transcription service. The parents completed a short survey after the interview to collect specific data points about family circumstances.

All transcripts were coded using Atlas.ti and quantitative survey data was analyzed in Excel. The interview transcripts were analyzed thematically and for comparisons within and between participants. Themes were then discussed by the Early Milestones research team.

Appendix B

Family Interview Guide

Intro Script

- ❖ I'm interested in learning about your family, any work you do, and overall, how you think about preschool and child care.
- ❖ Share some details about yourself as the interviewer (where you live, your job, if you have children or have taught).
- ❖ The way these interviews typically go, I'll ask you some short questions, but you'll be talking a lot more than me. If you think of stories, examples, or details to share as you're answering the questions, those are very helpful.
- ❖ You can feel free to use the first names of children, parents, or teachers. I will turn these into pseudonyms in the transcripts and in published research.

Follow-up Questions

Experiences	Opinions & Feelings	Theorizing
Tell me about the last time you...	How do you feel about that?	In an ideal world, what would (it) be like?
Describe a typical...	How does that compare to what you expected?	What are the challenges/barriers to...?
Can you give me an example?	How do you think this compares to other preschool teachers?	Drawing comparisons <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How has this changed over time?▪ How has this changed during the pandemic?▪ How do you think other teachers deal with these challenges?

Interview Questions

About You

First, I'd like to just know you a bit.

- ❖ Tell me about yourself.
- ❖ What's your household/living status like? Tell me about the other adults or children you live with.
- ❖ What culture does your family identify with? Is your family multi-cultural or multi-racial?
- ❖ [Get the name of and details about the child, who is three.]

About Your Neighborhood

Many families look for child care in their neighborhood. I'd like to know more about where you live.

- ❖ Can you describe your neighborhood or the area that you live in?
- ❖ How long have you lived there?
- ❖ How did you end up living here? Did you make a decision in what neighborhood you'd live in?
- ❖ What do you like about it?
- ❖ What do you not like about it?
- ❖ When you think about the races and cultures represented in your neighborhood, do you feel you fit in?
- ❖ Do you think it's a good place to raise your child(ren)? Why/why not?
- ❖ Do you plan to stay here long-term?

Paid Work

Next, I want to ask about what you and your family do for work.

- ❖ Do you currently work for pay? What do you do for work?
 - How long have you been doing this job?
 - Do you have additional jobs?
 - What are your hours like?
 - Are your hours set, or flexible?

- If they are flexible, who decides when you will come in?
- ❖ Do you commute to work?
 - If so, what mode of transportation?
 - How long is your commute?
- ❖ Do you enjoy your work? Is it something you see yourself doing long-term?
 - Are you in school or pursuing any sort of higher education?
- ❖ [If applicable] What about other adults or teenagers in your house? Do any of them work for pay?

Day in the Life

- ❖ Can you walk me through a typical day for your family when your 3-year-old is going to child care? How and when does everyone get where they need to be?
 - Who watches your child while you work?
 - Who does pick-ups and drop-offs?
 - Hours?
 - How far away?

About Your 3-Year-Old

We are interested in all members of your family, but we especially want to know what you think about child care and preschool for [CHILD].

- ❖ Can you please tell me about your 3-year-old? What is their personality like? What activities do they like to do?
- ❖ Can you please walk me through who has provided child care for your 3-year-old, starting from birth?
 - If needed, differentiate between regular, full-time care and occasional care.
 - If they mention a nanny or babysitter, ask how they found that person.
- ❖ How did you decide on your current childcare? What factors were most important?
 - Probes: cost, location, curriculum, the provider/teacher?
- ❖ What do you like about your current child care arrangement?
- ❖ What don't you like?

About Your Child Care Arrangements – if they have other children

- ❖ Who provides child care for your other children?
- ❖ How did you find this person/place to care for your child?
- ❖ Does your child care for this child change month to month, or by the season?
- ❖ Any anticipated changes to child care for your kids in the next two years, as they get older?

Plans for 2023 Preschool

Now I'd love to chat about what your ideal plans would be for your child next school year. **Note:** If they express that they want to keep their child at home or out of organized care, focus on the positives and reasonings around that.

- ❖ Thinking about next fall, when [CHILD] is 4 years old, do you want them to attend preschool?
- ❖ What does a good preschool do for kids, in your opinion?
- ❖ Do you have any specific preschools in mind for CHILD?
 - What do you like about these places?
 - Do you have a sense of if it'll be hard to get in?
- ❖ How do you think about choosing a preschool?
 - Probes: how does your work situation matter for your choice?
 - How does care for other kids matter for your choice?
 - How does transportation matter for your choice?
 - How does food provided or not matter for your choice?
 - How does race or culture at the school matter for your choice?

Cost of Child Care

Finally, if we could talk about the cost of child care.

- ❖ How much do you currently pay for child care?
- ❖ Do you feel this is an affordable amount?
 - Have you had to cut back your budget for other things so that you could pay for child care?
- ❖ [If applicable] Could you afford to pay more for child care?

- What would cause you to do so?

Concluding Comments

Those are my questions for you.

- ❖ Is there anything that you thought I'd ask that we haven't been able to talk about?
- ❖ What questions do you have for me?

Appendix C

Preschool Director Interview Guide

Intro Script ---

- ❖ I'm interested in learning what it's like to work as a child care/preschool director.
- ❖ Share some details about yourself.
- ❖ I'll ask you how you came to work here, what your experience has been like, and how this job fits into your life more broadly. Next, I'll ask you about your perception of the kids, their race and class backgrounds, and how family stressors affect your day in the classroom. I'll then transition to asking about your experiences with state systems including CCCAP, Colorado Shines, and the new UPK program.
- ❖ The way these interviews typically go, I'll ask you some short questions, but you'll be talking a lot more than me. If you think of stories, examples, or details to share as you're answering the questions, those are very helpful.
- ❖ You can feel free to use the first names of children, parents, or teachers. I will turn these into pseudonyms in the transcripts and in published research, and I will also only describe your school using general characteristics. I will be very careful to remove identifying things about families or anything that might come up about other teachers or staff. Do you have any questions for me so far?

[Do consent form.]

Follow-up Questions

Narratives/Experiences	Opinions/Feelings/Facts	Theorizing
(Can you) tell me about the last time you...	How do you feel about that?	In an ideal world, what would (it) be like?
Tell me about what it was like...	How does that compare to what you expected?	What are the challenges/barriers to...
Describe a typical...	How do you think this compares to other centers?	Drawing comparisons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How has this changed over time? ▪ How has this changed during the pandemic?
Can you give me an example?		

Interview Questions

About You and Your Background

- ❖ Tell me about yourself.
- ❖ When did you begin working here (month and year)?
 - How long have you worked in Early Childhood?
 - What did you do before (if applicable)?
- ❖ What brought you to this job?
 - How did you come to work at this school?
- ❖ How did you decide you wanted to be a director?
- ❖ What is your educational background?

Center Work

Okay, so now if we could talk about your experience working here

- ❖ What are your center/child care/preschool hours?
 - Did you choose the hours? If so, why?

- Would you like to be open different hours?
 - What stops you?
- Describe a typical workday.
- What kind of tasks do you perform at this job?
- What responsibilities do you have?
 - How often do you fill in for teachers in the classroom?
- How many children do you currently have enrolled
 - Is this your max capacity/would you like to enroll more or less children?
- ❖ What do you enjoy most about your job?
- ❖ What is the hardest part of working here?
- ❖ How has your experience working here changed over the years that you've been here? In what ways?
- ❖ What do you think makes you good at your job?

Challenges & Staffing

- ❖ Tell me about your current staff.
 - How many teachers do you currently have?
 - Are you fully staffed?
- ❖ On an average day, how many teachers call-in?
- ❖ How has staffing changed over the years?
- ❖ Do you think your center/school is a good place for teachers to work?
 - Why or why not?
 - Would you recommend that someone work at this preschool as a teacher?
- ❖ What are your biggest challenges as a director?
 - What would you need to address those challenges?

Interacting with Children & Families

Now I'd like to ask you about the children in your center

- ❖ What do you personally think is most important for children to learn while they're here?

- ❖ Do you use a particular curriculum?
 - What do you like about it?
 - What frustrates you about it?
 - Who chose the curriculum?
 - How do decisions about curriculum get made?
- ❖ Overall, how would you describe the social class background of families? [There is no wrong way to describe this!]
- ❖ Can you tell me about a time that a family's challenges at home impacted your job with the child at school?
- ❖ How often do you communicate with families? How often do your teachers?
 - Do you have any specific methods of communication with families? An app, parent teacher conferences etc.?

Race, Ethnicity, Culture

- ❖ How would you describe the racial makeup of your school as a whole? Is there a racial background that most children share—for example, are most of them white?
- ❖ Do you implement any anti-bias education with your teachers? As part of the school curriculum?
- ❖ Do you/your teachers help the kids develop their identities? For example, race/ethnic identities? Gender identities? How do you go about doing this? What sorts of posters/pictures/activities on the walls might contribute to this. Do you have books and activities/curricula planned that help children understand race and ethnicity?
- ❖ Do you feel like your school mirrors the neighborhood around it concerning race and ethnicity?
- ❖ Do families ever bring up race/ethnicity with you or the teachers?
- ❖ Have your feelings about anti-bias education, diversity, or teaching about race or ethnicity changed in the past 5 years? How?

State Systems – CCCAP, Shines, and UPK

- ❖ Do you take CCCAP?
 - If yes, do you have any families right now that are using it?
- ❖ Do you have a specific ratio you like to keep for private pay vs. CCCAP or CPP families?
 - How many families use each method now?

- ❖ How often do you communicate with your CCCAP case manager/the CCCAP office?
- ❖ Do you feel like CCCAP is easy to manage?
 - What would you change about the way CCCAP is administered to make your job easier?
- ❖ [If they don't take CCCAP] Why don't you take CCCAP?
 - What would make you consider accepting CCCAP?
- ❖ What is your Colorado Shines rating?
 - Do you feel this is accurate?
- ❖ Are you working on raising your shines rating?
- ❖ What would you change about the Colorado Shines rating system or process if you could?
- ❖ Are you planning to be a UPK provider, why/why not?
- ❖ If you are did they sign up, how was that process?
- ❖ Do you plan to change anything about the number or ages of children you enroll due to UPK?
- ❖ Do you plan to change anything about your staffing or hours due to UPK?
- ❖ In general, what are your thoughts about the state offices you work with as a director?

Future Plans

- ❖ In your opinion, is being a preschool director a good job? Why or why not?
 - Do you feel like early childhood is a good place to work? Why or why not?
- ❖ Do you plan to be in the same job position two years from now? Explain.
- ❖ How do you feel about how much you are paid for the work that you do? Does it match what you'd ideally be paid?
- ❖ Do you have any plans to expand your center/business in the next two years?

Closing Questions

- ❖ Is there anything you'd change about Colorado's early care and learning system? What would it be?
 - The country overall?

That's the end of the questions I had for you

- ❖ Is there anything you thought we would have talked about that I didn't ask?
- ❖ Anything else you want to share about your life as a center director/preschool director?
- ❖ What questions do you have for me?