**OVERVIEW**


**WHAT'S NEW**

During the 2017-2018 school year, Colorado integrated a P-3 approach to build a comprehensive, high-quality continuum of learning from birth to age 8 that vertically and horizontally aligns to support the unique needs of all children. Additionally, the state revised the Colorado Academic Standards, which are set to be fully implemented by Fall 2020. The state also passed legislation to add 1,000 additional slots to the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) for the 2018-2019 school year.

The Colorado Department of Human Services was awarded a Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five award in 2018 for $5.8 million to help build a quality early learning system for children birth to age five and their families. Colorado aims to do this through Colorado Shines Brighter. Colorado Shines Brighter is based on the state’s shared vision to ensure all children are ready for school when entering kindergarten. The program will work towards three outcomes: (1) increased access to and choice of quality formal early childhood care and education settings which best meet the needs of each child and family; (2) enhanced informal early childhood care and education environments (parental, friend, family, and neighbor care) to enrich and support children’s physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development; and (3) coordination and alignment of Colorado’s B-5 early childhood state system to enhance the resources available to families and improve the quality of relationships among families, caregivers, and children.

**BACKGROUND**

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) launched in 1988 for 3- and 4-year-olds who needed language development support in hopes of lowering school dropout rates and reducing dependence on public assistance. In 1992, CPP became a permanent program and expanded eligibility to young children lacking overall school readiness due to family risk factors, as defined by statute, including eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, being a dual language learner, being in foster care, a family history of abuse or neglect, homelessness, parental substance abuse, or having a teen parent, as well as locally determined risk factors. Four-year-olds must meet at least one risk factor to enroll in CPP, while 3-year-olds are required to meet a minimum of three risk factors.

In the 2017-2018 school year, 98% of the state’s 179 school districts offered CPP. CPP slots can serve eligible pre-K students, and Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) slots can serve either pre-K students or provide full-day services for eligible kindergartners. Two half-day slots can be combined to create full-day opportunities for pre-K children with very high needs. Schools may provide pre-K service by subcontracting with private child care centers, Head Start, or other community-based or public agencies. Funding is awarded competitively with priority given to districts with exemplary implementation plans and/or not currently participating in CPP.

CPP funding is determined by the Colorado school finance formula, with preschoolers receiving half the amount for students in grades 1 through 12. Funds are distributed directly to school districts, which are given a predetermined number of half-day slots to serve eligible children. CPP providers may use additional funding sources, such as federal Head Start money, to extend the program day, supplement services, or provide wraparound care.
COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment ................................................... 21,446
School districts that offer state program ...................................... 98%
Income requirement ........................................................... 185% FPL
Minimum hours of operation ............................................... 2.5 hours/day
Operating schedule ................................................................. School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ............................ 8,516
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .......... 8,198
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ................. 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY</th>
<th>CO PRE-K REQUIREMENT</th>
<th>BENCHMARK</th>
<th>REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early learning &amp; development standards</td>
<td>Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive</td>
<td>Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum supports</td>
<td>Approval process &amp; supports</td>
<td>Approval process &amp; supports</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher degree</td>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher specialized training</td>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Specializing in pre-K</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant teacher degree</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>CDA or equivalent</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff professional development</td>
<td>15 hours/year</td>
<td>For teachers &amp; assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum class size</td>
<td>16 (3- &amp; 4-year-olds)</td>
<td>20 or lower</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-child ratio</td>
<td>1:8 (3- &amp; 4-year-olds)</td>
<td>1:10 or better</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening &amp; referral</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Vision, hearing &amp; health screenings; referral</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous quality improvement system</td>
<td>Structured classroom observations (above QRIS Level 1); Data used for program improvement</td>
<td>Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information about the benchmarks, see the Executive Summary and Roadmap to State Profile Pages.

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending ................................................. $54,374,180
Local match required? .................................................... Yes
State Head Start spending ................................................ $0
State spending per child enrolled ................................. $2,535
All reported spending per child enrolled* ...................... $4,240

* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

PRE-K*  $4,240
HDST** $10,496
K-12*** $12,779

Data are for the 2017-2018 school year, unless otherwise noted.