



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Wisdom of Investing in Early Childhood

Early environments play a large role in shaping later outcomes. Skill begets skill and learning begets more learning.

Early advantages cumulate; *so do early disadvantages.*

Later remediation of early deficits is costly, and often prohibitively so.

Dr. James Heckman
2000 Nobel Laureate in Economics

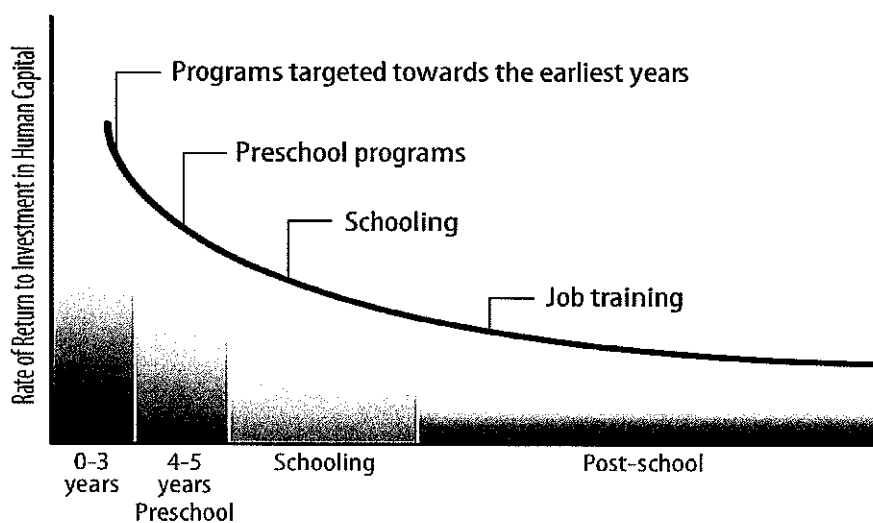


Investment in the Early Years: *Why It Matters So Much*

A strong foundation in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes over time:

- Brain architecture and developing skills are being built at a phenomenal rate – 700 neural connections made every second of a child's life in the first five years.
- Positive early experiences set the foundation for future learning, health, and behavior through adolescence and adulthood.
- High-quality early learning opportunities improve health; reduce the need for special education, educational remediation and welfare; reduce high school dropout, juvenile justice and incarceration rates; and increase home ownership, employment and economic productivity. The gains are greatest for children most at-risk.
- Rigorous longitudinal analyses of low-income 3- and 4-year-old children who attended a high-quality preschool program found them to be more likely to have graduated high school, attended college and owned homes at age 40.

RATES OF RETURN TO HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT AT DIFFERENT AGES



SOURCE: J.J. Heckman, "Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children." *Science* 312(5782):1900-2. (June 2006)

Early Childhood Education Program Components

- **Preschool Program**
 - ✓ Half-day developmental program for young children
 - ✓ Preschool PLACE specialized programming for children with significant support needs in the areas of challenging behavior and autism spectrum disorders
 - ✓ Preschool for children who are deaf or hard of hearing
- **Home-based Services**
 - ✓ Direct service and supports for children with disabilities who are medically fragile
- **Family Learning Opportunities**
 - ✓ Parenting classes featuring the Incredible Years social skills curriculum and the LEAP parenting program for children with autism spectrum disorders
- **Child Identification Program**
 - ✓ Developmental screening and evaluation of children birth to five years with suspected developmental delays or disabilities



Preschool Program Facts



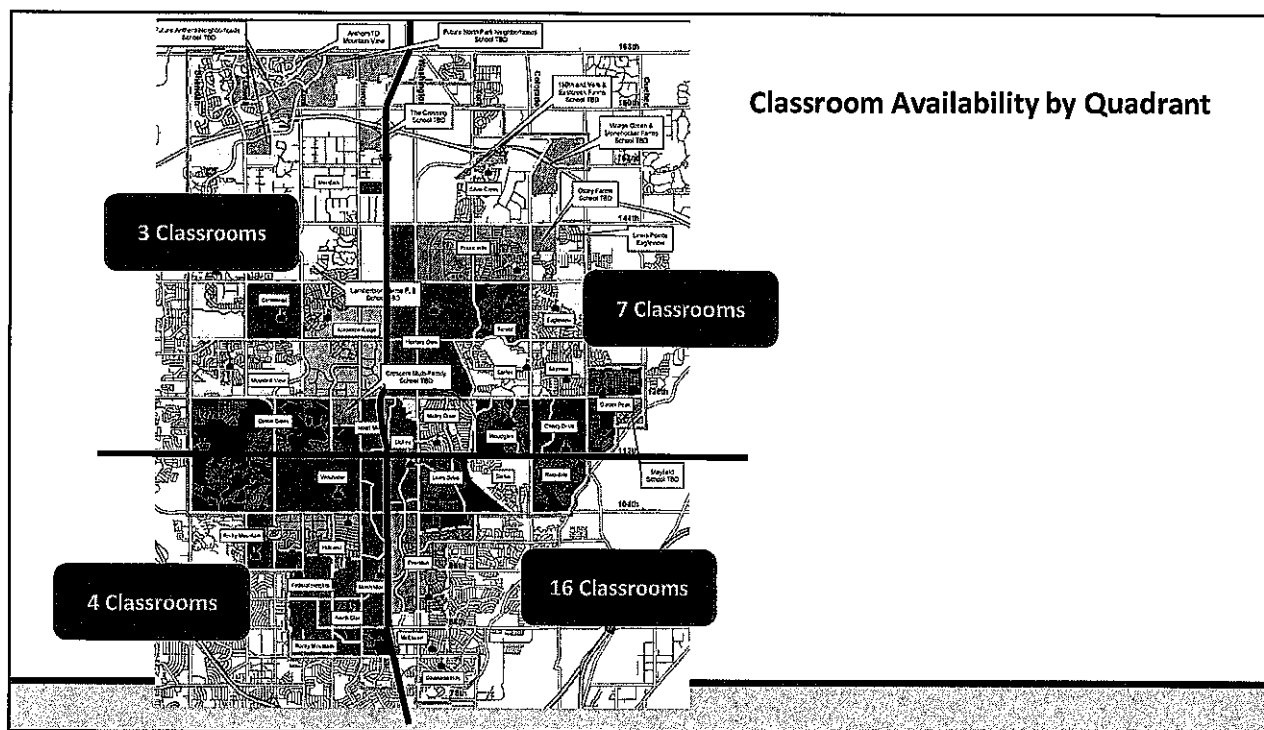
POPULATION

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program serves children ages 2 ½ to 6 years who have:

- Developmental delays or disabilities
- Significant factors present that are shown by research to place them at high risk for academic failure

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- Hybrid model of 10 school-based sites and 1 child development center
- 30 classrooms
- Each classroom provides two half-day sessions four days per week
- Maximum of 16 children per session; 8 with disabilities and 8 at-risk



Preschool Program Facts



FUNDING

- The program is funded through:
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – federal funds for special education service provision
 - State public school finance funds – .5 Per Pupil Revenue (PPR)
 - Small amount of general funds – helping to support start up of four expansion classrooms

ENROLLMENT

- Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) for children at risk for academic failure capped at 692 three and four year olds – FULL with waiting list of 300+
- Preschool special education program is not capped – currently serving 360 children. That number will grow to over 480 by the end of the school year.

Are We Doing What's Right for Kids?

Preschool Program Compliance and Quality Issues

Issue 1: Too Few Preschool Slots Overall

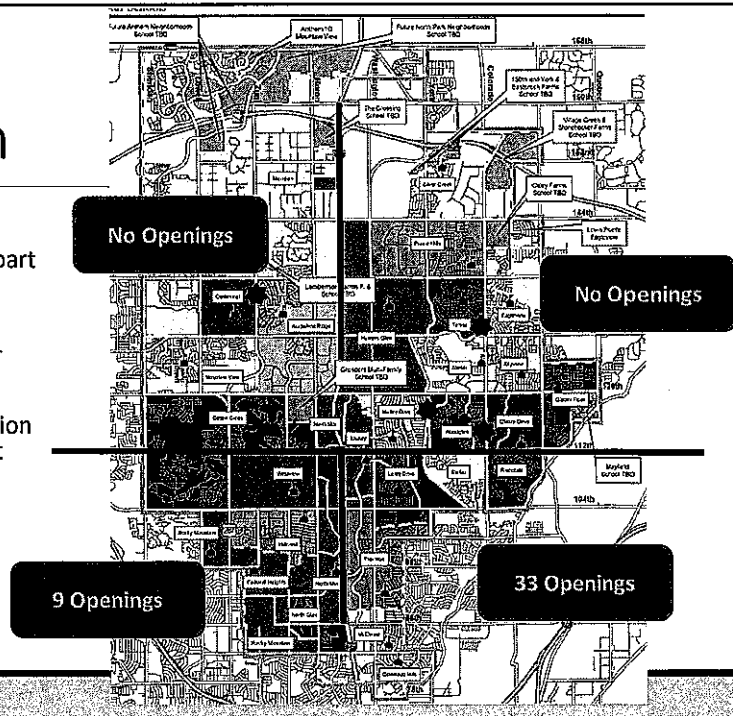


- At the beginning of the 2015/2016 school year, the preschool program was already nearing capacity
- 128 additional eligible preschoolers with disabilities will be identified before the end of the school year
- There are more than 300 eligible children waiting for CPP slots, but the district is not prepared to receive additional funded slots from the state due to limited space
- Too few slots led to the elimination of the district's tuition preschool program. CPP-eligible children are now counted as the "typical peers" in an inclusive classroom, however, these children often have developmental and behavior challenges. Both groups need positive peer models.

The district is preparing to add four additional classrooms (8 sessions) in January. There is a waiting list of families interested in a tuition program at these new sites.

Issue 2: Too Few Slots in the North

- Many families of children with disabilities who live in the northern part of the district are unable to access preschool at a neighborhood school
- ★ = Special education waiting list for neighborhood schools
- Some families decline special education services because programming is not available closer to their home



Issue 2: Disparate Level of Services for Three-Year-Olds with Disabilities

- The district is providing four half-days per week of programming for all eligible three- and four-year-olds *except* three-year-olds with disabilities.

A three-year-old child with a disability receives only two half-days per week.

- Children with the highest need are receiving half the programming as other children. Children least developmentally able to carry over learning from day to day come to school only twice a week.

Seven additional classrooms are needed in order to serve these children commensurate with their non-disabled peers.

Issue 3: Percentage of Children with Disabilities in Each Classroom is Too High

- Inclusive classrooms are defined by federal rule as those with 50% or fewer children with disabilities. 51% and above constitutes a segregated environment. If a classroom has to go over the 50% mark, that room is no longer meeting IDEA requirements for a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for the majority of the children with disabilities
- 27 district preschool classrooms began the school year at a 50:50 ratio.
- The high number of children with disabilities in each classroom:
 - Limits exposure to typical peer models and reduces positive outcomes.
 - Requires additional highly-qualified staff to meet the developmental and physical needs of the children.
 - Exacerbates the incidence of challenging behaviors.
- Best practice as defined by the Colorado Quality Standards for Early Care and Education Programs (CDE policy document) states that appropriate inclusion means no more than three children with a disability in a class of 16. (See next slide)

Blended Classroom Models – Class Size 16

Standard	Children Developing As Expected	Children At-Risk	Children with Disabilities
IDEA Minimum Requirement for LRE	8	*	8
CDE Guidance for Blended Classrooms	6	5	5
Colorado Program Quality Standards	8	5	3

The ECE program is already struggling to stay at the IDEA Minimum Requirement.

Other Considerations



- The district has outlined some capital funding for early childhood space in certificates of participation – decisions on how best to use this minimal funding will be made in conjunction with the priorities outlined by LRPAC
- There are national policy trends indicating that full-day preschool is going to be the norm
- Many families need full-day services or “wrap around” child care due to their work schedules
- There is a waiting list of families who would like to see a tuition program in the district