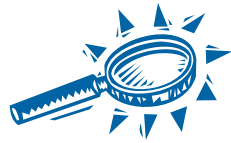




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# Blueprint Brief



A closer look at the research in  
**Blueprint for Opportunity:**  
**Issues that matter • Ideas that work**

Blueprint Brief No. 1

Aug. 22, 2006

## Give parents the option to enroll their kids in quality, affordable preschool and full-day kindergarten

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A safe and stimulating early childhood sets the stage for success during the first years of school and throughout a child's educational experiences. Ensuring access for all children to quality preschool and kindergarten opportunities is one of the most critical investments we can make in our future.

School districts that participate in the Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program (CPKP) have found that preschool education and family support can improve academic achievement, reduce special education placement and students having to repeat a grade, and leads to higher graduation rates.<sup>1</sup>

Lawmakers created the Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program (CPKP) in 1988<sup>2</sup> to serve children needing language development. It was expanded in 1992 to include children with significant family risk factors and some children in social services programs.<sup>3</sup> School districts are not required to participate in the program but most do.

School districts use 10 risk factors to determine a child's eligibility for the program, including income, language development, social development, parent education, frequent relocation and homelessness, violence or neglect in the home, and parent addiction to drugs or alcohol.<sup>4</sup> Because the CPKP has never had enough funding to serve all of the children who qualify, participating school districts try to serve the children with the greatest need. As a result, children in the program average three or more risk factors.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the unmet need for the program identified by school districts, the General Assembly is expanding the reach of the CPKP. During the 2006 legislative session, legislators funded 2,000 additional slots for the 2006-07 school year — 1,346 for preschool and 654 for full-day kindergarten — bringing the total number of slots in the program to 14,360.

Lawmakers also expressed their intent to fully fund the program by adding 2,000 more slots per year in the next two budget years, with no more than 15 percent for full-day kindergarten, reaching an overall total of 18,360 slots by

*Preschool education and family support can improve academic achievement, reduce special education placement and students having to repeat a grade, and leads to higher graduation rates.*

*The Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program (CPKP) serves children in need of language development, children with significant family risk factors and some children in social services programs.*

*During the 2006 session, legislators funded 2,000 additional slots for the 2006-07 school year, bringing the total number of slots in the program to 14,360.*

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the 2008-09 school year.<sup>6</sup> But legislators are not bound to carry out that intent in the 2007 and 2008 sessions.

With an additional \$5 million appropriated by the General Assembly to CPKP for FY 2006-07, total program funding is projected to be approximately \$45.3 million, with a state share of almost \$29 million.<sup>7</sup>

Table 1. The Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program tallies for 2005-06 and 2006-07<sup>8</sup>

Year	Number of preschool slots funded	Number of kindergarten slots funded	Total number of CPKP slots funded	Number of districts participating	Est. number of eligible students not served
2005-06	10,860	1,500	12,360	162 out of 178	5,715
2006-07	12,206	2,154	14,360	170 out of 178	7,931

Even with increased funding, the number of eligible students who cannot be served by CPKP is growing. According to Lori Goodwin Bowers, senior consultant with the CPKP at the Colorado Department of Education, this may be because the percentage of at-risk children is increasing and because more school districts are joining the program. In fact, the number of eligible students not served is likely understated. Once the available slots are filled, school districts usually do not recruit more students for waiting lists.<sup>9</sup>

**✓ Give parents the option to enroll their kids in quality, affordable pre-school and full-day kindergarten**

**We should fully fund the Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program, extend it to all districts, and increase outreach to serve all families in need. We should also help school districts provide the option of full-day kindergarten to those parents who want it. This year, the Legislature took a major step in this direction, but it needs to finish the job.**

**End Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> [Colorado Preschool Program 2006 Legislative Report](#), Colorado Department of Education,
- <sup>2</sup> The program was originally called the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). Its name was changed by the General Assembly as part of the 2006 School Finance Act (HB06-1375).
- <sup>3</sup> [Colorado Preschool Program: 2005-06 Handbook](#), Colorado Department of Education,
- <sup>4</sup> Colorado Preschool Program 2006 Legislative Report
- <sup>5</sup> Personal communication, Lori Goodwin Bowers, CPKP, June 15, 2006
- <sup>6</sup> HB06-1375, [Concerning the Funding of Public Schools, and Making an Appropriation Therefor](#), Colorado General Assembly, signed by the Governor April 28, 2006, and [Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program, Request for Proposal For 2006 Expansion Slots For Districts Not Currently Participating in CPKP](#), Colorado Department of Education, May 15, 2006,
- <sup>7</sup> L.G. Bowers, CPKP, June 23 and 27, 2006. Funding numbers represent projections, and will not be finalized until after the Oct. 1, 2006, student count.
- <sup>8</sup> Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program, Request for Proposal; Colorado Preschool Program 2006 Legislative Report; personal communication, L.G. Bowers.
- <sup>9</sup> [Colorado: The State of Opportunity 2005 Report](#), The Bell Policy Center, November 2005.



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*Lawmakers expressed their intent to fully fund the program by adding 2,000 more slots per year in the next two budget years, reaching an overall total of 18,360 slots by the 2008-09 school year.*

*Total program funding is projected to be approximately \$45.3 million, with a state share of almost \$29 million.*

*The number of eligible students not served is likely understated. Once the available slots are filled, school districts usually do not recruit more students for waiting lists.*