The Denver Preschool Program: *Stakeholder Perspectives on Outreach & Enrollment*

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The Denver Preschool Program: Stakeholder Perspectives on Outreach & Enrollment

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Project Background

Children undergo tremendous change and growth before they reach kindergarten. These years are critical in developing lifelong abilities that can determine their quality of life and societal contributions (Loeb and Bassok, 2007). Early childhood education (ECE) programs can benefit children, communities, and society. For example, quality ECE is associated with children’s improved social skills, increased vocabulary development, stronger school attendance, and increased graduation rates (National Education Association, 2013; Heckman et al., 2010; Masse and Barnett, 2002). The Federal Reserve estimated the benefit-cost ratio of ECE programs – for every one dollar spent on an ECE program, anywhere from 4-16 dollars of public taxes are saved (Grunewald, 2013; Heckman et al., 2010; Reynolds et al. 2002). Despite these benefits, a range of socio-economic and other barriers prevent access to ECE programming for many children, including insufficient family income, low levels of parental education, and incompatibility between home and preschool language (White House Council of Economic Advisors, 2014; USDE, 2006).

To increase the enrollment of children in quality ECE programs, the Denver Preschool Program (DPP) was approved by voters in 2006 to provide preschool tuition support for all families in Denver. In the 2013-14 school year, DPP provided funding for 53% of eligible children and aims to further increase its reach each year. Additionally, DPP provides mini-grants to preschool providers for quality improvement efforts such as professional development opportunities for preschool staff and quality rating assessments.

“At Denver Preschool Program we are a champion for quality, accessible preschool across our community.” –Denver Preschool Program, 2016

In November 2014, DPP released a request for qualifications to support the design and implementation of a qualitative study to inform a refined outreach campaign. The study sought to obtain rich information and diverse perspectives from parents, caregivers, preschool providers and other community stakeholders through focus groups and key informant interviews. OMNI Institute (OMNI) was contracted by DPP from February through November of 2015 to fulfill the objectives of this study. OMNI is a Denver-based, nonprofit (501(c)3) social science research firm with the mission of advancing the work of agencies serving the public interest through applied research, capacity building, and technology solutions. OMNI assembled an internal project team of staff with knowledge of early childhood education systems as well as expertise in qualitative methodologies. OMNI also worked closely with a DPP Advisory Board, which was convened to oversee fundamental components of the study, from the development of key research questions to the review and interpretation of study findings. This group included marketing and outreach experts, data analysts, providers, and other community and parent stakeholders who provided input on all elements of the work. OMNI, in close collaboration with the DPP Advisory Board, identified the following five key areas of inquiry and corresponding research questions:
DPP Awareness and Understanding
- What do providers and parents/caregivers understand about the purpose of DPP and its role in early childhood education?
- What do providers and parents/caregivers know about who DPP serves/who is eligible to receive DPP funds?

Information and Outreach
- How have caregivers and providers accessed information about DPP?
- What do caregivers site as key trusted information sources and preferred communication platforms?
- How could DPP enhance relationships/partnerships with families, providers and the community in general?
- What are provider views about their role in DPP promotion? What needs do providers indicate?

DPP Materials Feedback
- What are parent/caregiver and provider perceptions about DPP informational materials?

Preschool Access Issues
- What influences parent/caregiver choices regarding preschool and DPP enrollment?
- What are barriers that parents/caregivers may face when enrolling in DPP or in preschool in general?

DPP Enrollment Process
- What do parents/caregivers and providers/liaisons understand about the process for DPP enrollment?

Following the description of study methods below, this report organizes project findings within each key area of inquiry. OMNI presented project findings to the DPP Advisory Board and facilitated a discussion to further contextualize findings and inform the development of potential action steps. This report concludes with a summary of the Advisory Board discussion and potential areas for DPP action.
Methods

MEASURE DEVELOPMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

Once key areas of inquiry and broad research questions were established for the study, OMNI developed data collection tools including focus group and key informant interview guides. Advisory Board members closely reviewed the guides to confirm that critical question areas were addressed as well as to ensure that the language and terminology used was appropriate for each participant group. Interview guides were designed for 30 minute phone interviews with preschool providers whereas focus group guides were developed for 90 minute focus groups with parents, caregivers and community parent liaisons (See Appendix A for the complete Focus Group Guides and Appendix B for the Key Informant Interview Guide). OMNI also created consent forms and a brief demographic survey to obtain information about study participants. From June through September of 2015, OMNI researchers conducted nine key informant interviews, one focus group with community parent liaisons and six focus groups with 52 parents/caregivers (4 conducted in English and 2 conducted in Spanish).

SAMPLING AND PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

OMNI worked closely with the DPP Advisory Board to determine initial sampling and recruitment strategies for both key informant interviews and focus groups. The final sampling rationale and participant characteristics are outlined in further detail below but overarching strategies included selecting a balance of various types of preschool providers (e.g., large and small) and parent/caregivers with a range of characteristics (e.g., enrolled currently in DPP versus not enrolled; parents of younger children not yet eligible for DPP; parents of preschool-aged children not in preschool, etc.). Denver neighborhood maps that included key DPP data indicators such as rates of preschool enrollment and density of available preschool providers were examined to identify communities to target for recruitment. We sought to obtain information from neighborhoods with lower DPP enrollment and/or lower preschool availability to learn about barriers, as well as neighborhoods with higher enrollment that could highlight successful outreach approaches.

Once the sampling rationale was defined, key participant recruitment efforts included the following:

- For primer communications and general recruitment efforts, OMNI developed informational flyers and communications describing the study.
- For key informant interviews, DPP generated a list of potential providers and made initial contacts to assess interest and availability.
- For focus groups, OMNI developed a list of key community organizations and contacts from target neighborhoods based on DPP contacts, Advisory Board connections within the community and OMNI relationships with local organizations.
For both interviews and focus groups, OMNI conducted extensive outreach via phone and email, and OMNI staff visited several community locations to post flyers, share information about the focus groups, etc.

For focus groups, OMNI collaborated closely with identified partner organizations (e.g., community centers, libraries, advocacy groups) from each neighborhood of interest to recruit potential focus group participants.

OMNI worked with community contacts to ensure that focus group times and interview slots were convenient for participants. DPP provided incentives for provider participants (gift cards for school supplies) as well as focus group participants (gift cards to Target or local grocery stores and a meal during focus groups).

**Provider Perspectives**

The evaluation sought to identify providers who would offer unique insights about their overall relationships and experiences with DPP; the evolution of relationships over time; potential DPP information-sharing strategies for families and ideas for how DPP can best support providers in these efforts; and potential barriers to parent enrollment in their communities. Ultimately, the following characteristics were considered to select provider key informants with a balance of perspectives:

- Large, community-based and DPP providers
- Smaller centers and home-based providers
- Providers with low or decreased enrollment
- Providers with consistently high enrollment

**Provider Characteristics**

Nine provider interviews were conducted and included:

- 5 ‘small’ and 4 ‘large’ providers
- 1 home-based provider
- 2 providers who offer bilingual services

**Parent Liaison Perspectives**

OMNI and DPP also conducted outreach to convene a focus group with employees from community organizations who serve in parent liaison roles. These individuals were able to critically reflect on many of the same areas as providers, yet offer unique insights through their direct work with families and parents/caregivers at their organizations.

1 Attempts were made to include both a direct staff/teacher and an administrative/leadership staff in interviews but proved to be challenging for most providers. Ultimately, key informants were directors, lead administrators or assistant principals, as well as one teacher who was able to participate in a group interview.
Parent Liaison Characteristics
One community parent liaison focus group was conducted and included:
- Six participants representing staff from the following community organizations: Clinica Tepayac, Denver Health and Invest in Kids.

Parent/Caregiver Perspectives
The evaluation sought to identify parents and caregivers who would offer unique perspectives about DPP informational materials and outreach strategies; experiences with DPP enrollment; and key considerations or potential barriers that they may face when making decisions about preschool enrollment. The overall recruitment strategy focused on gathering insight from parents who are less often accessed to provide feedback and/or may be less tapped into traditional sources of information or networks. For example, rather than recruiting at the DPP Preschool Showcase or via formal parent networks, we sought to identify parents who may be in underserved or isolated communities. Ultimately, we were interested in learning from parents and caregivers with the following characteristics to obtain a broad range of perspectives:

- Parents/caregivers who reside in areas of high and low preschool and DPP enrollment
- Parents/caregivers of preschoolers enrolled in DPP
- Parents/caregivers of preschoolers not enrolled in DPP
- Parents/caregivers of preschool-aged children not enrolled in any preschool
- Parents/caregivers of 0-3 year olds considering preschool options

Parent/Caregiver Characteristics
OMNI conducted six focus groups with 52 parents/caregivers in the following neighborhoods of interest and community sites:

- Southwest Denver/Westwood: Padres y Jovenes Unidos
- Southwest Denver: Bear Valley Library
- Southeast Denver: Families First
- Northeast Denver/Montbello/Green Valley Ranch/Northwest Park Hill: GVR Public Library
- Northeast Denver: Sam Gary Library
- North Central Denver/Globeville/Elyria/Swansea: Focus Points

A full description of focus group participant demographics is located in Appendix C and can be summarized as follows:
• Over half of participants (58%) had children enrolled in DPP preschools; 18% had children in non-DPP preschools; and a quarter (24%) reported having preschool-aged children not currently enrolled in any preschool.
• Half (50%) of participants identified as Hispanic/Latino
• Nearly all participants were female (96%)
• Over a quarter (28%) of participants reported being from bilingual households and 18% from households in which Spanish was the only language spoken
• Nearly half of participants reported an annual family income of $40,000 or less
• Approximately two-thirds (65%) of participants reported having 2-3 children

ANALYSIS
All focus group and interview dialogue was digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. Transcriptions were uploaded to NVivo, a qualitative analysis software. Analysis was guided by the development of key themes and a standardized coding structure. OMNI assembled an internal team of three qualitative analysts who independently coded the transcripts and convened as a team to review emerging themes throughout the analysis process. Analysis placed particular emphasis on unique issues raised by individual participant groups as well common issues raised by providers, liaisons and parents/caregivers across geographic areas and groups.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/LIMITATIONS
It is important to consider the following factors when exploring study findings and their potential implications. Many qualitative studies, such as this one, seek to obtain rich information from a select group of respondents rather than a representative examination of all participant experiences (for which survey methods and sampling are more appropriate). Thus, project findings may not generalize to the population of providers, parents/caregivers and parent liaisons. The study was able to recruit a diverse group of 52 parents, nine providers and six community parent liaisons from whom common themes emerged. Nonetheless, recruitment difficulties, including recruitment during the end of the school year and difficulty identifying interested participants, made it challenging to explore perspectives unique to participants with certain characteristics (e.g., identification of neighborhood-specific strengths and challenges).

In spite of these limitations, common themes emerged across all focus groups and interviews, regardless of geographic area or characteristics of provider/liaison and parent/caregiver participants. Although some distinct insights or potential action steps were shared by providers and parent liaisons versus parents/caregivers for example, overarching views typically aligned across all groups.
Findings

Focus groups and interviews revealed a wide range of complexities related to community access to preschool, some of which may be directly addressed by DPP and some of which may be beyond DPP’s purview. Despite the wide range of issues raised, common themes addressing study questions emerged from parents/caregivers, parent liaisons, and providers. Project findings are organized by the following five key themes that answer initial research questions and align with insights shared by focus group and interview participants:

- **DPP Awareness and Understanding**: Participant knowledge of core DPP program elements
- **Information and Outreach**: Key information sources and potential outreach strategies identified by participants
- **DPP Materials Feedback**: Participant feedback on DPP informational materials
- **Preschool Access Issues**: Participant insights regarding potential barriers to enrollment
- **DPP Enrollment Process**: Participant perceptions about the DPP enrollment process and its relationship to the process of enrolling in preschool overall

When distinct views surfaced by group (i.e., parent/caregiver versus provider/liaison groups), we note these distinctions when reporting the findings. When core views were consistent across respondents, we report findings collectively. Participant quotes supporting key themes also are shared as relevant, to further illustrate key findings and highlight the critical importance of participant voices.

**DPP AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING**

*What do providers and parents/caregivers understand about the purpose of DPP and its role in early childhood education?*

*What do providers and parents/caregivers know about who DPP serves/who is eligible to receive DPP funds?*

We first assessed general awareness and understanding of the Denver Preschool Program, including its purpose and its role in the community. To ensure that all participants had a minimum basic level of shared understanding about DPP, focus groups with both parents/caregivers and parent liaisons began with participants reviewing the “For Families” pages on the DPP website via iPads as well as DPP printed materials (i.e., parent and provider posters, parent brochure and ‘How to Choose a Preschool” flyer). All focus group participants, therefore, reviewed these
materials prior to engaging in discussion about their understanding of DPP and its services. Because provider interviews were conducted via phone and basic understanding of DPP was assumed due to ongoing involvement with the program, providers did not review DPP materials prior to answering questions in this area.

**Most Commonly Understood Elements of DPP**
The following programmatic elements were typically understood by providers/liaisons and parents/caregivers alike. These included the following broad areas, as articulated by participants:

- **DPP aims to reduce the cost of preschool for Denver families by providing tuition assistance**
- **DPP has eligibility requirements**
- **DPP intends to prepare Denver’s children for kindergarten (i.e., meet school readiness goals)**
- **DPP contains a quality improvement component**
- **DPP provides a critical/needed service for the community**

The areas listed above all demonstrate a broad understanding of the purpose of DPP as well as an overall appreciation for its existence and the essential services it provides for the community. This indicates that through its direct communication with providers as well as its informational and outreach materials, DPP provides a foundational level of understanding about the program. Still, a number of areas of confusion or misperceptions about the program emerged among both provider/liaison and parent/caregiver groups.

**Most Common Areas of Confusion**
Providers and liaisons typically had a higher level of understanding about DPP than parents/caregivers. This was expected, given providers and liaisons had direct communications with DPP as a designated provider or key community organization working with parents of preschool-aged children, respectively. Nonetheless, many providers and liaisons expressed confusion over certain program elements. Below, we describe key areas of confusion for each set of respondents.

**Provider/Liaison Participants**
The areas of potential confusion that existed among providers and community parent liaisons included the following:

- **Eligibility Requirements:** First, most providers and liaisons were hesitant to report certainty regarding program eligibility requirements. The majority of participants provided
broad responses such as “all children age 4 are eligible” or “eligibility is based on income”, and many reported only some of the requirements while missing others.

- **Funding Source(s):** The majority of providers were not aware of the history of DPP as a voter-approved program and the basis of its funding.

- **Role in Quality Improvement:** Finally, many providers and nearly all parent liaisons expressed confusion about the role of DPP in quality improvement efforts for ECE. Some reported knowing that funds are allocated for provider quality ratings but were uncertain about the larger DPP vision or strategy in this area and the extent to which DPP aims to improve the quality of all its designated providers.

**Parent/Caregiver Participants**

The majority of parent/caregiver participants had limited knowledge about DPP prior to focus groups. Although parents/caregivers with children enrolled in the program generally understand that they received tuition assistance from DPP, many were unaware of DPP’s purpose or how the program operated. Most received enrollment applications from the preschool without additional informational or marketing materials. Many participants utilized focus groups as an opportunity to learn and ask clarifying questions about the program. Once accessing the basic DPP informational materials provided at the start of focus groups, the majority of parents/caregivers were able to share a similar, basic level of understanding about the program. Still, a number of clear misperceptions surfaced across focus groups and are listed below as most commonly articulated by participants:

- **DPP guarantees the quality of its providers:** Many parents shared the belief that DPP preschools are assured or guaranteed to be of high quality. A few parents reported challenging experiences with a DPP provider and because the assumed guarantee didn’t meet their expectations, they felt they should seek a non-DPP provider for a replacement preschool. Parents were also unclear about how providers are selected to be part of DPP and what that process entailed or meant for their family in terms of preschool selection (i.e., what are the implications of enrolling my child in either a DPP or non-DPP school?).

- **DPP is a preschool/provider:** Parents/caregivers often expressed the understanding that DPP was their service provider or preschool, rather than a separate program or entity. For example, some participants referred to “DPP schools” and the belief that being a “DPP school” indicated a specific brand, curriculum, method, or quality of education.

> “And it’s confusing too, it sounds like it, because DPP is not a program, they’re just in a lot of preschools or school settings, or different settings and they help with tuition assistance and they help with the quality of those settings. But it’s not a program in and of itself.”
> - PARENT/CAREGIVER PARTICIPANT
• **DPP intends to assist families with preschool placement:** Many participants believed that DPP assures a level of assistance with locating a preschool placement or even guarantees the availability of programming and preschool admission. Many parents who experienced barriers to enrollment (e.g., no availability in their specific geographic area) understood that DPP was intended to support them in this way. Some expressed frustration with key DPP messaging such as “Making High-Quality Preschool Possible” and still not being able to find an available preschool in their area.

• **Enrolling in DPP = enrolling in preschool:** Relatedly, participants expressed confusion about the distinction between preschool enrollment and DPP enrollment. Some reported the belief that reading about the importance of preschool and clicking “Enroll your Child Now” on the DPP website indicated simultaneous enrollment in both preschool and DPP. Some parents also shared that because DPP funds are folded into the tuition structure of Denver Public Schools (DPS), and preschool enrollment requires substantial paperwork in general, parents may often not realize when DPP funds are utilized to prorate their preschool costs, and they then attribute the assistance to DPS rather than DPP.

• **DPP is part of DPS:** Many participants reported confusion regarding the nature of the relationship between DPP and DPS. First, some believed that DPP tuition assistance could only be applied to DPS preschools. Second, many participants felt that without more information or context about DPS enrollment and its relationship to DPP, information about DPP did not make sense.

• **DPP is for low-income families only:** Less commonly mentioned was the belief of a few parents/caregivers that a family must be enrolled in TANF or another public assistance program in order to be eligible for DPP tuition assistance.

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“...The Denver Preschool Program, I wasn’t sure if that was something where they placed your kid. I’m not really totally sure, just seeing that Denver Preschool Program...I didn’t think that was very clear, I guess. Even reading this, when it says, ”Making high-quality preschool possible,” and then I think back to how frustrated I was, trying to just get him into a preschool that was within a 10-minute drive of us was kind of a challenge.”

-PARENT/CAREGIVER PARTICIPANT
In addition to exploring provider and caregiver awareness and understanding of DPP, we gathered participant perceptions about DPP information sharing and outreach strategies. First, participants were asked how they had accessed DPP information to date and what information sources they had found most useful. Second, participants explored communication, relationship-building and general outreach strategies they might recommend to build DPP awareness and ultimately increase enrollment.

Sources of DPP Information

Provider/Liaison Participants

Providers and parent liaisons most commonly reported accessing DPP information over time through the following sources:

- DPP Website
- Newsletters/Email Blasts
- Personal Communications (e.g., phone calls, in-person visits, etc.).

Participants noted the clarity and overall helpfulness of informational materials as well as general ability to navigate the website and find needed information. Providers also strongly emphasized the power of personal communications and how appreciative they were of the DPP enrollment team who had connected with them individually, answered questions, and made efforts to check in or reconnect after the initial process of becoming designated DPP providers.

Parent/Caregiver Participants

Parents/caregivers indicated a broader range of methods for having learned of or accessed information about DPP to date. These are listed below according to frequency of mentions across focus groups:
• **Word of Mouth:** Participants most commonly reported hearing about DPP through family, friends and acquaintances; this was particularly stressed in focus groups with Spanish-speaking participants.

• **Schools:** Schools were cited as key, trusted information sources from which participants had learned about DPP, the services it provides for the community, and their potential eligibility for the program.

• **Radio Stations:** Participants also indicated having first heard about DPP through local radio station advertisements.

• **Festivals and Local Events:** A few participants reported having learned about DPP through a festival or local event in their community; none of these individuals reported the DPP Preschool Showcase as an initial source of information, however.

• **Social Media Networks:** Social media networks (e.g., Facebook) were noted by a few participants as initial sources of DPP information.

• **Website:** While many participants did indicate having accessed the DPP website for information at some point, it was not reported as a preliminary source of information but rather a method to “learn more” once introduced to DPP.

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**Potential Information and Outreach Needs**

**Provider/Liaison Participants**

Providers and liaisons were asked about their perceived role in DPP promotion and what types of needs DPP could address in order to expand this role. Participants noted a number of key supports that would enable them to serve as more effective ambassadors for the program:

• **Increased Personal Communications:** Just as providers emphasized the effectiveness and importance of individual communications to learn about DPP, the majority noted that even more ongoing personal communications would foster stronger connections to the program. While liaisons had not typically experienced the same level of prior communication with DPP as providers, they too noted that more personalized relationship-building efforts with community organizations would deepen connections and strengthen DPP ties to the communities served by these groups.

> “...I think it would be nice for us to be able to say, okay, our DPP partner is [x person] and we can reach out to them directly with these kinds of questions.”

> -PRESCHOOL PROVIDER
• **Ongoing Access to Printed Materials**: Both providers and liaisons indicated that continued access to printed DPP materials would facilitate their own outreach and information sharing efforts with families and community members. Some providers noted that although materials are provided at the start of the partnership with DPP, they also would appreciate a process to request additional printed materials via mail or otherwise.

• **DPP Information Sharing about Broader Efforts**: Participants also emphasized wanting to learn more about larger DPP efforts and vision for its work. For example, increased information sharing with providers and community organizations about DPP quality improvements and learnings could further increase understanding of the program as well as community buy in and investment.

• **Preschool Showcase Outreach Efforts**: In addition to the above needs related to increasing provider and liaison roles in DPP outreach, participants also frequently mentioned the DPP Preschool Showcase as an event that could be expanded to broaden its reach within diverse communities. Changing or increasing the number of event locations, enhancing advertising strategies and creating more of a family-friendly atmosphere were all mentioned as potential strategies to incentivize attendance and attract more diversity in the families who attend.

**Parent/Caregiver Participants**

Parent/caregiver participants also were asked about potential strategies they believed would increase the effectiveness of DPP information sharing and outreach efforts.

• **Increased Presence at Community-Level Events**: Participants shared that DPP could capitalize on opportunities to increase its presence at local community and neighborhood events and festivals. They noted that events commonly attended by local residents would foster connections with community members at the neighborhood level and enhance relationship and overall awareness-building efforts.

• **Outreach through Community-Level Organizations and Businesses**: Participants also noted the importance of utilizing community organizations, religious institutions, and local businesses (e.g., grocery stores and markets) to facilitate DPP outreach efforts at the neighborhood level. Participants specifically noted family and parent-oriented programs such as HIPPY, Parents as Teachers, and Family Resource Centers as specific service providers who could outreach on behalf of DPP. Many also strongly emphasized that local
neighborhood clinics, doctor/pediatrician offices and hospitals would be critical avenues through which to access families.

- **Information Call Line**: Across focus groups, parents/caregivers surfaced the idea of an informational line that families could access with questions about DPP. Many emphasized that families often prefer phone contact and the opportunity to ask questions of a liaison or representative if needed. Having a call line with bilingual staff was cited as important for reaching Spanish-speaking parents.

- **Local Media**: Participants also noted that local news programs and free publications (e.g., Colorado Parent Magazine) would be effective avenues through which to expand outreach efforts.

- **Preschool Showcase**: Finally, participants echoed provider/liaison reflections that the Preschool Showcase event could be expanded to reach more diverse communities by offering additional locations or incentives and activities for whole families to attend.

## Denver Preschool Program Materials Feedback

All participants were asked to provide feedback on DPP materials including, but not limited to, the DPP website, flyers, pamphlets/brochures, banners, billboards, and other DPP informational products they may have seen or received over time. As mentioned, DPP materials (including printed materials and iPads to view the website) were provided for participant review at the start of all focus groups with parents/caregivers and community parent liaisons. Providers did not have access to these materials at the time of interviews as they were conducted via phone and providers were assumed to have a higher level of base program knowledge than both parent/caregiver and parent liaison groups. All participants were asked whether DPP materials provide sufficient information regarding program purpose and services offered. They were also asked about any critical content they thought was missing as well as the general clarity, language and format of materials.

> “It’s always better if you’re personally speaking with somebody so that you can make sure...I mean, if somebody always answers the phone and you can speak with somebody if you have any questions.”

- **Parent/Caregiver Participant**
Although many parents/caregivers had not seen informational materials prior to the focus groups, providers and parent liaisons frequently mentioned having accessed the DPP website in the past. Providers also mentioned receiving informational emails or newsletters directly from DPP while some parents/caregivers cited exposure to materials (e.g., posters, pamphlets, etc.) at schools, libraries, and local health clinics. Several parents mentioned getting information in the mail (brochures and postcards) and a few parents received materials from a DPP showcase.

Participant Feedback on DPP Materials

Parents/caregivers, providers and liaisons all provided some level of positive feedback about the DPP informational materials. Positive feedback from providers included descriptions such as “understandable”, “straightforward” and “self-explanatory” while parents/caregivers most often used descriptive phrases such as “interesting” and “professional”.

Parents/caregivers were more likely than providers to give constructive feedback regarding the materials. Parents often noted that the information and language used could be confusing, particularly if families have limited education or experience with terminology related to early childhood education. Providers and liaison participants shared this view from their own perceptions of materials or from parent feedback they had received over time. Parents/caregivers, liaisons and providers all noted details that could be added to improve the comprehensiveness of the information included in DPP materials:

- **Key Dates**: Participants most commonly indicated that enrollment dates were essential to include in materials, along with basic information about alignment with a child’s birth date.

- **Sense of Urgency**: Participants greatly stressed the importance of communicating a sense of urgency around beginning preschool searches and enrollment processes early. They also emphasized the need to share with families the realities of limited availability of preschool openings as they learn about DPP.

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“I think they do a fantastic job, very colorful, not overwhelming, very diverse children on the materials, very clear.”

-PRESCHOOL PROVIDER

“...if you are not educated or experienced with preschools or maybe even having graduated from high school yourself, then yeah, [the materials] would be confusing...Even when they’re saying the benefits on this one...that they’re great at ‘outperforming their peers and the graded assessment,’ that might not mean anything to some parents.”

-PARENT FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

“Like our school’s summer program flier I got said that ‘our space is limited, hurry up and call.’ Like I felt urgency...I’d better call tomorrow so my kid gets a space, versus in general with enrolling, I didn’t feel the urgency. I knew the deadlines because of previous mistakes,...but if I didn’t have that older kid and have made that mistake, I would have never known.”

-PARENT FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT
- **Invitation to Connect**: Participants noted that a statement such as “Questions? Call us!” could reduce the formality of the materials and increase the likelihood that families would feel comfortable seeking additional information as needed.

- **“Eligibility Requirements”**: A few participants noted that use of the term “eligibility” can be confusing and suggested identifying a simple statement that conveys the requirements quickly and accurately without using “eligibility” terminology. Further, some noted that indicating what information is needed from families in order to apply, could reduce concerns that families may have about eligibility or required personal information.

- **Rules for Use of Tuition Funds**: Participants also felt materials should convey that DPP tuition assistance could be used at both public and private preschools.

- **Website Search Functions**: Finally, participants suggested adding search filters and/or maps on the website that would assist families in their search for preschool. Some ideas included filters for school versus home-based programs, and maps indicating current availability within preschool programs.

**PRESCHOOL ACCESS ISSUES**

To explore the larger issue of access to preschool and its relationship to DPP enrollment, parents/caregivers as well as providers/liaisons were asked about key factors that families consider when deciding whether or not to enroll in preschool. All groups were also asked about potential barriers they (or families with whom they work) have encountered when attempting to enroll in preschool. Although we asked about considerations and barriers separately, the issues raised in each set of questions often overlapped.

**Key Considerations**

Parents and caregivers often spoke at length about the value of Early Childhood Education, and they clearly understood and communicated the importance of preschool in terms of academic, social, and emotional development, as well as its long-term benefits to the education and well-being of their children. Some reported frustration about existing perceptions that parents may not value preschool or understand its importance, and believed that there was an unnecessary emphasis on this within some messaging from DPP and other entities.
When reflecting on what critical factors impact family decisions about preschool enrollment, overall, parents/caregivers, liaisons, and preschool providers all surfaced the same overarching themes. Common factors are listed below according to frequency of mentions across focus groups and interviews. However, participants often emphasized that in spite of the range of factors families consider when making preschool decisions, they are often forced to enroll solely based on availability. That is, families may ultimately enroll at a location simply due to the limited space in preschool programs they may have otherwise preferred. The common factors listed below, therefore, may or may not play into a family’s final decision simply because of limits in program availability.

- **Cost:** The cost of preschool tuition was the most frequently mentioned factor that families consider when making choices about preschool.

- **Location:** The second most commonly mentioned factor was location, as families often note the importance of finding a convenient preschool location that is feasible in terms of being able to drop-off and pick-up their child in a reasonable timeframe, etc.

- **Schedule:** The available hours of preschool was another critical factor mentioned as parents seek hours that coordinate with work schedules, school schedules for other siblings, additional family obligations or caretaking duties, etc.

- **Recommendations/Word of Mouth:** Participants, and parent/caregiver groups in particular, stressed the significance of hearing about a preschool location through a family, friend or other connection, as trusted recommendations increased their confidence in the program and provided them with the essential information for enrollment. Participants perceived that parents with personal connections and information sources were more likely to enroll successfully and on time. This included connections or relationships that families may have with preschool providers and the ability to establish trust in teachers and administrators before deciding to enroll.

“**Well, there’s definitely advantages from them starting preschool aside from just the academic piece. There’s the social piece because they’re now interacting with other students, they’re building vocabulary because of the constant verbalization that’s going on. And they’re also learning structure, independence, routine, and discipline.”**

-PARENT FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

“I feel like that could be really disappointing to parents who have this idea ‘if my kid is going to this school things are going to be fine’ And you don’t even have a spot, right? This is a reality of ECE in this community.”

-PRESCHOOL PROVIDER
• **Quality Rating:** Some participants noted that they (or families with whom they work) rely on key indicators of quality (e.g., published ratings and other assessments) to make decisions about preschool.

• **Language and Diversity:** Some participants also emphasized that diversity and the availability of bilingual education was a critical consideration for many families. Some parents/caregivers in particular noted experiences in which they felt less welcome at schools with limited diversity; they want their children to feel comfortable and included within the school.

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“We wanted to know if the school had, well if the students... if there was a little diversity, too. Because I didn’t want my son to think that he was different, too different from the rest. Sometimes, I have seen it with my children, especially my oldest son, when he is the only person of color in a group, they treat him differently, especially because he speaks Spanish. So, for us it was very important to find a place where there was other children who looked like him, I don’t know, that was important for us, another factor.”

-PARENT FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

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**Barriers to Preschool Enrollment**

The key considerations above that were surfaced by participants directly related to the top barriers that families may face when enrolling in preschool programs. It is important to note that many of the barriers cited across provider/liaison and parent/caregiver groups may not relate directly to DPP enrollment or be within the scope of DPP’s programming. Nonetheless, they are critical areas for reflection as DPP explores outreach strategies and considers ways in which various barriers may impact specific groups or communities more profoundly.

• **Availability and Locating a Preschool Program:**

The most common barrier to preschool enrollment cited by participants was the time and resources required to search for a preschool program. This encompassed two issues: first, the limited availability of preschool programming, and second, the complicated process of navigating potential options. Many parents shared experiences of frustration and feelings of hopelessness when encountering extensive waitlists and not being able to locate programs in their areas. The overall management of the preschool search process was noted as highly challenging, particularly for first time parents. Participants mentioned wide variation in potential options including location, type (e.g., large versus small programs, curriculum/approach), and costs. Both provider/liaisons and parents stated that...
while additional web search tools may assist in this process, they would be less effective than a phone line or in-person navigation assistance would be.

- **Schedule**: As noted above in the key preschool considerations section, participants frequently cited that limitations in preschool pick-up and drop-off windows can be a significant barrier to preschool enrollment. With variation in family work obligations and school timing for additional siblings, ensuring that a short day of preschool would fit into the schedule could be overwhelming.

- **Transportation**: Transportation was cited as an obstacle that can further complicate scheduling issues. Ensuring available transportation and/or the time it might take to navigate public transportation can create a barrier for many families.

- **Cost**: Cost was still cited as prohibitive for some families, even with the support of DPP funds, depending on which schools the family may have chosen or had available space.

- **Lack of Parent-Provider Relationship**: Some parents/caregivers reported challenges with provider relationships in terms of feeling unwelcome or as if they had been treated differently than other parents, leading to an overall lack of parent comfort or trust in the program. This surfaced largely within Spanish-language focus groups as some participants reported experiences with arriving to enroll as early in the process as possible and being put on a wait list, yet seeing others who had come at the last minute be enrolled first. Although rare, a couple of participants mentioned community beliefs that children would be safer with family or known caregivers because of stories of poor care in preschool or that some parents may simply not feel ready to allow their children to leave home before Kindergarten.

> "I think they should maybe offer more coordination when you enroll, to see if you need help, and have somebody available to walk you through the process in schools, and how to find a school that’s right for you, versus just kind of leaving everything up to you."

_-PARENT FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT_

> “Large families don’t want to drop all their kids off, just to have one kid in preschool for a couple of hours. We need better transportation to preschool to make it accessible. “

_-PARENT FOCUS GROUP_
Focus groups and interviews explored participant experiences enrolling in the Denver Preschool Program. Parents/caregivers and providers were asked about their perceptions of the DPP enrollment process as well as whether they had any recommendations for improvements. When asked how they learned about the process for DPP enrollment, parents/caregivers commonly reported getting this information from their preschool providers or through the DPP website. Providers typically learned about the enrollment process directly through DPP and materials provided. Most providers expressed a clear understanding of the process for enrollment and how to communicate this clearly to parents; those who did not understand the process were generally liaisons/caseworkers or individuals who are not responsible for enrollment at their schools.

Positive Enrollment Experiences

Once parents and caregivers were clear about the existence of the DPP program itself, eligibility requirements and critical dates for enrollment, participants shared that the DPP paperwork was clear and straightforward. Parents/caregivers did not report specific challenges with the actual process of enrollment and several reported that the paperwork process was the "easy part". Providers and liaisons also described the process as self-explanatory, quick, streamlined, and user-friendly. Most providers also reported that they help families with the enrollment process, including finding another provider if full.

Enrollment Feedback

While the paperwork part of the enrollment process was clear, all participants (parent/caregivers, providers and liaisons alike) shared many common barriers that parents can face with preschool enrollment in general. Many of these issues overlap with what participants shared related to general barriers to preschool enrollment and improving DPP informational materials.
• **Timely Information about Key Dates and Deadlines:** As participants also cited when discussing feedback about DPP informational materials, many shared that enrollment challenges surfaced from missing deadlines or being unsure of the timeline for enrollment into preschool and how it overlaps with their child’s age/birthdate. Several parent participants also reported learning about the option for DPP enrollment too late in the process. Finally, a few reported experiences that enrollment was described by their providers as non-essential or an additional potential burden in an already long preschool enrollment paperwork process. In these few cases, the participants expressed feeling that their providers had inadvertently downplayed the importance of the program and its capacity to offset preschool costs for their families.

“...you have to register in December or January to get your kid in school. Nobody knows that. With my eldest daughter, she missed out because I thought you registered at the beginning of school, and so I’ve learned that throughout the years, but if you don’t know that, or have friends or family who tell you that, you have no idea. Then, you’re stuck in a position where you can’t get your kid in school, because you weren’t informed...”

**PARENT FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT**

“...you have to register in December or January to get your kid in school. Nobody knows that. With my eldest daughter, she missed out because I thought you registered at the beginning of school, and so I’ve learned that throughout the years, but if you don’t know that, or have friends or family who tell you that, you have no idea. Then, you’re stuck in a position where you can’t get your kid in school, because you weren’t informed...

**PARENT FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT**

• **Language and Required Documentation:** Additional reported challenges included language barriers, legal status of families, and obtaining required documentation for the application. Parents/caregivers and liaisons shared that the use of the language “documentation” can create discomfort with some parents, as they may face challenges with obtaining proof of legal status, income and permanent address. Parents and liaisons also shared that a lack of access to Spanish translators at preschool locations, especially during the enrollment process, can create barriers. One of the most common recommendations was to have a multilingual DPP representative present at events and schools to help parents with preschool search and enrollment processes.
Conclusions and Potential Action Steps

Throughout the information gathering process, a number of clear strengths emerged related to DPP’s current programming and outreach strategies. Not only is DPP valued and seen as a critical service in the community, participants shared positive feedback about the informational materials and their personal interactions with the program. Participants also provided a range of ideas that can be used to lead to new strategies or further refinement of existing strategies. There were also key areas identified, such as limited access to childcare in general, that while reflective of critical community needs, may or may not be within the scope or capacity of DPP efforts at this time.

To develop potential next steps for DPP, OMNI formulated a preliminary, high-level outline of potential action items within each of the five areas of study findings (See Figure A below).

OMNI completed a presentation and facilitated an extensive dialogue session with DPP Advisory Board members to discuss key findings and priority areas for improvements based on study findings. OMNI began the meeting with a presentation of key findings and then engaged the Advisory Board members in a broad discussion of each area, using Figure A and the following questions to guide the discussion:

- What are the most critical areas/priority issues for improvements to X area?
  - What are some of the least resource intensive strategies that could be employed to address some of these issues?
What might be some of the most resource intensive or longer-term strategies that could be employed?

- What are additional unanswered questions? What new questions have findings in this area raised?

After the DPP Advisory Board discussed each area, members selected the two domains they felt to be of highest priority: Awareness and Understanding and Information and Outreach. The remaining dialogue about prospective next steps was focused within these two areas. Throughout the meeting, OMNI staff documented the potential strategies and action steps that the Advisory Board members mentioned. In Table 1 below, we organize these strategies and ideas for next steps based on study findings by key themes and research questions, noting that there is overlap in some areas. Although action steps are outlined for all areas below, particular detail is provided within the two areas selected by the Advisory Board: Awareness and Understanding and Information and Outreach.
Table 1: Denver Preschool Program: Potential Action Areas for Ongoing Outreach and Community Engagement

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<th>Key Theme</th>
<th>Potential Action Areas</th>
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| **AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING** | • Clarify DPP’s role in ECE quality improvement efforts to correct community perceptions that DPP guarantees the quality of its providers. Examine terminology used that may communicate quality assurance or guarantees (e.g., “DPP funds quality preschool”). Consider using terminology such as “participating providers” versus “certified”, “licensed”, “approved”, etc.  
  • Consider reducing messaging space aimed to educate parents about the importance of preschool to messaging about other critical information.  
  • Contemplate revising “eligibility requirement” language to language that more explicitly describes who can receive funds.  
  • Consider including language that clarifies the distinction between DPP and DPS and language that shows that DPP is a separate entity rather than a provider itself or “brand” of preschool.  
  • Consider engaging community stakeholders in the process of vetting changes to informational materials to ensure clarity of messaging. |
| **INFORMATION & OUTREACH**    | • Consider increasing targeted grassroots efforts at the community/neighborhood level to grow “word of mouth” information sharing. Efforts could include: 1) increased DPP presence at local community events, festivals, etc.; 2) DPP hosting of smaller informational meetings/events at schools or other local organizations; 3) neighborhood-level outreach; 4) parent-to-parent outreach and sharing of experiences at all of the above.  
  • Develop partnerships with local community organizations (e.g., family/parent liaison groups, key neighborhood-level entities, health clinics/pediatricians, etc.) to facilitate partner outreach efforts on behalf of DPP and cultivation of more community-level/neighborhood champions.  
  • Continue to focus on strengthening provider partnerships. Efforts could include: 1) increasing overall level of proactive approach that provides ongoing support and contact (e.g., annual check-in calls) rather than offering and waiting (i.e., “we are here if you need us”); and 2) offering a clear and easy process for providers and other organizations to request additional printed materials.  
  • Continue discussions of DPP’s role as a community resource that helps parents access available preschool options through the development of a provider matrix that informs parents/caregivers of up-to-date information about DPP providers (e.g., schedules, locations, languages). |
| DPP MATERIALS | • Consider the following additions to key materials:  
|               | o Important dates, including when to search and enroll based on school year enrollment dates and age of child.  
|               | o Communication that emphasizes the necessity of early action to promote access to preschool and limited availability of preschool locations.  
|               | o DPP’s ability to provide tuition support for both public and private programs.  
|               | o Direct DPP contact information and clear availability of language provisions if available.  
|               | o Additional DPP website search functions including: filters to search by type of program (e.g., school or home-based); a map or providers by area; and a search function to indicate current availability of programs. |
| PRESCHOOL ACCESS ISSUES | • Examine opportunities for earlier outreach (e.g., at birth, at 1, 2 and 3 year well checks/pediatrician visits), utilizing flyers or other materials that communicate messages such as “it is never too early to start looking into preschool”).  
|                 | • Increase outreach efforts before all key enrollment periods.  
|                 | • Consider allocating resources for program/provider search assistance (in addition to online functions) such as liaisons who can assist families with the preschool search and enrollment navigation. |
| DPP ENROLLMENT PROCESS | • Consider strategies that would streamline enrollment information with DPS and other providers. For example, coordination of enrollment dates and paperwork deadlines or including links to provider-level enrollment information and dates within preschool search functions.  
|                 | • Consider the use of terms “residency” or “documentation” and how this may impact family perceptions of program eligibility. |
References


Appendix A: Parent/Caregiver and Liaison Focus Group Guides

Parent/Caregiver Focus Group Guide – 90 minutes

Key parent groups:
- **DPP enrolled**: 3-5 year olds in preschool and enrolled in DPP/approaching end of school year and potentially recent graduates/older children who were enrolled in DPP
- **Non-DPP/considering preschool**: 0-3 year olds considering possibility of preschool (emphasizing 2-3 year olds)
- **Non-DPP/not enrolled in preschool**: 4, 5 or 6 year olds who chose not to have child attend preschool

Review of Materials
- Distribute the DPP materials listed below as participants enter the room and get settled, etc. Ask that participants review the materials at their leisure as they wait for focus group to begin. Explain that part of our discussion today will be getting some feedback from them about these materials.
  - Parent and provider posters
  - Parent Brochure
  - “How to Choose a Preschool” Flyer
- Distribute iPads and ask participants to also review the following functionalities of the DPP website:
  - “For Families” pages including “Find a Preschool” tool and “Tuition Credit Calculator”

Study Background Information and Consent
- Refer to consent form and thoroughly review information with participants.

General Understanding of DPP
1. **All groups:**
   - First, we would like to understand more about what you all may already know or don’t know about the Denver Preschool Program. Based on what you know about DPP:
     a. What do you think is the overall purpose of the Denver Preschool Program? What services does DPP provide to the community?
        *Probe re: how participants view DPP: a program that provides funds for families to attend preschool, a program that works to improve the quality of Denver preschools, or both.*
     b. Who does the program serve?/Who is eligible for the program?/Who can enroll in the program?
        *Probe re: eligibility based on income*
     c. Where does the money/funds for the program come from?
Information and Outreach

Transition/intro of next section

2. **DPP enrolled:**
   a. How have you received information about DPP (e.g., internet/website, social media, community forums/meetings/fairs, brochures, preschool provider, post card in the mail etc.)?

   **Considering and No preschool:**
   - For those of you who have received information about DPP before now, how did you find/come across this information? (e.g., internet/website, social media, community forums/meetings/fairs, brochures etc.)?

3. **All groups:**
   a. For those of you who have attended a DPP preschool showcase, how helpful was it in learning about DPP? Was the information provided at the event useful to you? If you are aware of the Preschool Showcase and chose not to attend, could you tell us about why you didn’t attend?
   b. How do you and families in your community usually get information about educational and other services for children? Who do you trust most for this type of information?
      - **Probe re:** internet, libraries, friends and family referrals, celebrities, church, other community programs children may be involved in, etc.
   c. What are your other daily sources of information? (i.e., TV, radio, newspapers, Internet, etc.)
   d. What do you think are the best ways for DPP to share information about the program with the community?
      - **Probe re:** specific recommendations: which websites, what stations, which publications (vs. simply the internet, television, radio, newspaper)
   e. What additional ways would you suggest for DPP to reach out to families in your community?

4. **All groups (will be sharing some DPP informational materials first/at the focus group so all participants will be able to respond to these questions)**
   What, if any, DPP informational materials have you seen in addition to what we have shared today? What are your overall thoughts/impressions about the DPP informational materials that you have seen?
   a. Do materials provide enough information about DPP for someone to understand what the purpose of the program is, what services they offer, etc.?
   b. What, if anything, do you think is missing from the materials?
   c. How well do you think DPP materials communicate information in the following areas:
      - Information about finding a preschool
      - Preschool tuition support provided by DPP and who can receive program assistance (eligibility criteria for families)
      - DPP enrollment processes
      - DPP’s goal to help improve the quality of preschool
   d. Do you think the materials are clear and easy to understand?
   e. What do you think about the general language used in the materials (e.g., clear, confusing, friendly, formal, trustworthy, formal, approachable, etc.)?
f. What do you think about the general format of the materials, pictures used, etc.?
g. What, if anything, do you think would improve DPP informational materials?

Enrollment Processes

5. **DPP enrolled:**
   How did you learn about the process for enrolling in DPP?
   a. How was enrolling for DPP part of your process for enrolling in preschool? Do you remember enrolling in DPP or did it seem more like part of enrolling in preschool in general?
   b. Please tell us more about what the enrollment process was like for you. Was the process clear? Confusing? How much time did it take?
   c. Is there anything that you would recommend to improve the enrollment process for DPP?

   **Considering and No preschool:**
   What do you understand to be the process for enrollment in DPP? How do you think the process relates to enrolling in preschool in general?

Relationships and Barriers to Enrollment

6. **All groups:**
   When did you first start thinking about whether or not to enroll your child in preschool (how old was your child)? What are some things that influenced your decision?
   a. What should families think about when deciding whether to enroll in preschool? What do you think are some of the reasons that your family, or other families, choose to enroll in preschool?
   b. What about reasons for not enrolling in any preschool? What are some reasons that your family or other families you know decided not to enroll in preschool? If there was a time that you considered preschool and then decided against it, what changed your mind?
   c. What are some options other than preschool that you or other parents might choose and what are some of the reasons for those choosing those options? For example, care at home, with family or with another caregiver.
   
   **Probe re: potential reasons/barriers:** family values that may conflict with preschool enrollment; cultural or religious reasons, perceived access to quality programs; transportation/location; funds; other access issues, etc.
   d. What are some ideas that you have for ways to help parents/caregivers who want to enroll in preschool but face some barriers?

7. Once families have decided on preschool, what do you think are some reasons that your family (if applicable) or other families choose to enroll in DPP? What about choosing not to enroll in DPP? How, if at all, does the DPS school choice process impact your decisions about enrolling in preschool and DPP?

8. What are your ideas for how DPP can be better promoted or shared about in your community?
a. How can DPP help the community to better understand its role in helping families have access to quality preschool? How can DPP better communicate about its work with the community?
b. What do you think that DPP could do to improve its overall relationship with families and the community?

Summary Questions

1. Is there anything else that you would recommend for DPP to increase awareness about the program or improve its support to families in the community?
2. Of all the things we discussed today, what did you feel was the most important and why?

DPP Parent Liaison / Case Manager Focus Group Guide – 90 minutes

Study Background Information and Consent

- Refer to consent form and thoroughly review information with participants.

General Understanding of DPP

1. How would you describe the Denver Preschool Program to a parent that you work with? What is your understanding of the services that DPP provides to the community?
   a. Based on what you know about the program, who is DPP intended to serve? What families are eligible for the program?/What are the eligibility criteria for families to receive DPP funds?
      Probe re: eligibility based on income
   b. Are you aware of where funding for DPP comes from?
   c. How would you briefly summarize the enrollment process for DPP?
   d. How would you briefly summarize DPP’s role in quality improvement for preschool? Do you think DPP’s quality improvement activities are seen as valuable?
      Probe re: whether participants view DPP as a program that adds value to preschool by investing in quality versus just a subsidy program

Information and Outreach

2. Are you aware of specific ways that DPP shares information about their program with providers and the community at large? What methods of communication do they use?
   Probe re: internet (e.g., website, social media, etc.), community forums/meetings/fairs, written information (e.g., brochures, etc.)
   a. Which of these have you typically used to access information about DPP? If you haven’t accessed DPP information before now, which of these do you think you would most likely use to access info about DPP?
   b. What do you think are the most trusted and effective ways to share information about DPP with parents and the broader community and why?
      i. Please share any methods or strategies that you have used to share resources with parents that have proved effective (e.g., TV, radio, print, internet).
   c. Are there any other communication methods that you think DPP should use?
3. Please briefly describe some of the DPP informational materials that you have seen, either today or prior to today.
   a. What kind of information do you generally see included in these materials? How well do you think DPP communicates its key messages in the following areas:
      - Preschool as a critical part of the education continuum
      - Information for families about finding appropriate, high quality preschool
      - Tuition support provided by DPP and eligibility criteria for families
      - DPP enrollment processes
      - DPP’s goal to help improve the quality of preschool, and their work on this with policy makers
      - DPP offers the resources to help preschools improve and sustain quality
   b. Do you think that informational materials are clear and easy to understand for providers? For community members? Can you explain more about why/Why not?
   c. Do you think that informational materials generally speak to/are appealing to/are compelling for providers? Why/Why not? What about for community members? Can you explain more about why/why not?
      Probe re: language used, general format of materials, pictures and branding used, overall tone: clear, confusing, friendly, formal, trustworthy, formal, approachable, etc.
   d. What, if anything, do you think is missing from DPP informational materials?
   e. Is there anything else that you think would improve the quality of DPP informational materials?

4. How do you think DPP could be better promoted for the families that you work with?
   a. What do you believe to be the role of community organizations like yours in the promotion of DPP?
   b. How could DPP better support your organization in promoting the program for families? Can you think of any specific resources that would be most helpful?

Relationships and Barriers to Enrollment

We’d like to talk for a few minutes now about potential barriers to enrollment in DPP and preschool in general. Depending on the roles you take within your organizations, you may or may not feel that you have opinions about some of these questions.

5. If you have worked with parents on preschool enrollment, what, if any, barriers do you encounter to getting families enrolled in DPP? Probe re: having access to needed information, etc.

6. What are some barriers that you think parents encounter to enrolling in DPP or in preschool in general? Are there specific reasons that parents you work with have cited for not enrolling in DPP? Thinking about parents who may have visited schools and ultimately decided not to enroll in preschool, are there reasons those parents have shared for not enrolling in preschool at all?

7. Do you have any ideas for how DPP could address some of the barriers that parents encounter when considering enrollment in DPP?
8. How do you think DPP can improve its relationship with community organizations? How do you think DPP could improve its relationship with families and the community?

**Summary Questions**

9. How can DPP improve its support related to increasing parent enrollment? What about enhancing its quality improvement resources?

10. Is there anything else that you would recommend for DPP to increase awareness about the program or enhance its outreach efforts?

11. Of all the things we discussed today, what did you feel was the most important and why?
Appendix B: Provider Key Informant Interview Guide

Provider Interview Guide – 30 minutes

Key provider groups:
- DPP providers: 8 interviews with 1 admin-level and 1 direct staff/teachers at each site as available
- Non-DPP Providers: 4 interviews with 1 admin-level and 1 direct staff/teachers at each site as available

Study Background Information and Consent
- Refer to consent form and thoroughly review information with participants.

General Understanding of DPP
12. How would you describe the Denver Preschool Program to a parent at your school? What is your understanding of the services that DPP provides to the community?
   a. Based on what you know about the program, who is DPP intended to serve? What families are eligible for the program? What are the eligibility criteria for families to receive DPP funds?
      Probe re: eligibility based on income
   b. Are you aware of where funding for DPP comes from?
   c. How would you briefly summarize the enrollment process for DPP?
   d. How would you briefly summarize DPP’s role in quality improvement for preschool? Do you think DPP’s quality improvement activities are seen as valuable?
      Probe re: whether providers view DPP as a program that adds value to preschool by investing in quality versus just a subsidy program

Information and Outreach
13. Are you aware of specific ways that DPP shares information about their program with providers and the community at large? What methods of communication do they use?
   Probe re: internet (e.g., website, social media, etc.), community forums/meetings/fairs, written information (e.g., brochures, etc.)
   a. Which of these have you typically used to access information about DPP? For non DPP providers: which of these do you think you would most likely use to access info about DPP?
   b. What do you think are the most trusted and effective ways to share information about DPP with providers and why?
   c. What do you think are the most trusted and effective ways to share information about DPP with the broader community and why?
      i. Please share any methods or strategies that you have used to share about your school that have proved effective (e.g., TV, radio, print, internet).
   d. Are there any other communication methods that you think DPP should use?
14. Please briefly describe some of the DPP informational materials that you have seen.
   a. What kind of information do you generally see included in these materials? How well do you think DPP communicates its key messages in the following areas:
      - Preschool as a critical part of the education continuum
      - Information for families about finding appropriate, high quality preschool
      - Tuition support provided by DPP and eligibility criteria for families
      - DPP enrollment processes
      - DPP’s goal to help improve the quality of preschool, and their work on this with policy makers
      - DPP offers the resources to help preschools improve and sustain quality
   b. Do you think that informational materials are clear and easy to understand for providers? For community members? Can you explain more about why/Why not?
   c. Do you think that informational materials generally speak to/are appealing to/are compelling for providers? Why/Why not? What about for community members? Can you explain more about why/why not?
      *Probe re: language used, general format of materials, pictures and branding used, overall tone: clear, confusing, friendly, formal, trustworthy, formal, approachable, etc.*
   d. What, if anything, do you think is missing from DPP informational materials?
   e. Is there anything else that you think would improve the quality of DPP informational materials?

15. For DPP Providers Only:
    How do you think DPP could be better promoted for the families at your school?
    a. What do you believe to be the role of schools in the promotion of DPP?
    b. How could DPP better support your school in promoting the program for families? Can you think of any specific resources that would be most helpful?

**Relationships and Barriers to Enrollment**

16. For DPP Providers Only:
    How, if at all, do you think that the DPS school choice process impacts parent decisions about enrolling in preschool and DPP?
    Does your program currently include the DPP application in your preschool enrollment materials? Why/Why not? What, if any, barriers do you encounter (as a provider) to getting families enrolled in DPP?

    If your location is full, would you typically refer families to another DPP provider in the community and how does this process work? Is there a role that DPP could play in supporting families with enrollment in these situations?

    For Non-DPP Providers:
    Please share any reasons for not being a current DPP provider. What would you need from DPP in order to become a provider? Are you aware of what types of quality improvement resources DPP offers to participating providers?

17. What are some barriers that you think parents encounter to enrolling in DPP or in preschool in general? Are there specific reasons that parents within your school have cited for not enrolling
in DPP? Thinking about parents who may have visited the school and ultimately decided not to enroll in preschool, are there reasons those parents have shared for not enrolling in preschool at all?

a. **For Non-DPP Providers:** Have any of your families advocated that your preschool should join DPP so they could receive tuition support?

18. Do you have any ideas for how DPP could address some of the barriers that parents encounter when considering enrollment in DPP?

19. How do you think DPP can improve its relationship with providers? How do you think DPP could improve its relationship with families and the community?

**Summary Questions (If time allows)**

20. Is there anything else that you would recommend for DPP to increase awareness about the program, enhance its outreach efforts or improve its support to providers?

For DPP Providers Only:

How can DPP improve its support related to increasing parent enrollment? What about enhancing its quality improvement resources?

21. Of all the things we discussed today, what did you feel was the most important and why?
Appendix C: Parent/Caregiver Focus Group Demographics

Table 1: Focus Group Participation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Participation (N=52)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Points</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Gary</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear Valley</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Valley Ranch</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padres Unidos</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families First</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Language Spoken by Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language (N=52)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33 English Language Surveys; 19 Spanish Language Surveys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only English</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and Spanish</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only Spanish</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another Language*</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*‘Another Language’ responses included: sign language, Japanese, Russian and Sinhala.*
**Table 3: Participant Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (N=52)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Participant Sex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex (N=52)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5: Participant Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity (N=52)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6: Participant Race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race (N=52)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other* responses included: ‘Hispanic’ (10%), Latino (4%) and Italian (2%)

**Participant Age (N=52)**

**Participant Race (N=52)**
### Table 8: Participant Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree (4 years)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Grade</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates Degree (2 years)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 9th Grade</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Grade</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Grade</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th Grade</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8: Participant Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$21,000-$40,000</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $20,000</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$81,000-$100,000</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $100,000</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$41,000-$60,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$61,000-$80,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 9: Number of Children of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Children</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Children</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Child</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Children</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 4 Children</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 10: Relationship of Participants to Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to Children (N=52)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11: Preschool Center Enrollment of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preschool Enrollment (N=52)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DPP Preschool</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Preschool</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-DPP Preschool</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 12: Type of Child Care/Education Setting of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Child Care/Education Setting (N=52)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Home Cared for by Parent/Guardian</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Preschool</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Home Cared for by Friend, Neighbor, or Family Member</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District Preschool</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Center</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Child Care Home</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*‘Other’ responses included private preschools, home schooling or previous DPP participants*