Denver Preschool Program

Achieving access to high-quality preschool for Denver’s children
Annual Report to the Community – 2009
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The Denver Preschool Program: Building a Brighter Future

A message from Gloria Higgins, Chairwoman, DPP Board of Directors; and James Mejía, Chief Executive Officer

In less than three years of operation, the Denver Preschool Program, or DPP, has made great strides towards making high-quality preschool accessible to each and every family in Denver. Since our inception in the fall of 2007, DPP has helped more than 11,000 children prepare for a lifetime of learning by increasing the availability of high-quality preschool throughout our community.

The impact of our work, however, goes far beyond the numbers. Making high-quality preschool available to Denver families is one of the best investments we can make in our community—a fact that numerous studies have articulated. Our public schools benefit because our children are better prepared for kindergarten. The community benefits from an increased investment in small businesses. And taxpayers benefit because our government will spend less on special education, crime prevention and social services. Looking at the much larger picture, our nation benefits from a more skilled workforce that will increase our competitiveness on a global scale.

Keeping this in mind, DPP remains laser-focused on the task at hand of ensuring every child in Denver—regardless of his or her family’s income—is afforded the same opportunity to receive a high-quality early education. We are steadfast in this mission and believe that by continuing to provide tuition credits to families and quality-improvement grants to preschools, we will make our community a better place. Our children deserve nothing less.

We’ve accomplished quite a bit in a short amount of time, and we haven’t done it alone. From the voters who passed the ballot initiative creating DPP to the providers that carry out our mission on a daily basis, our success truly has been a collaborative effort. We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to the providers, teachers and staff who make up our extraordinary network of preschools. We certainly wouldn’t be where we are today without the hard work of the DPP staff, our Board of Directors and our Board of Advisors, and we thank them for their dedication. We’d also like to thank Mayor John Hickenlooper, his Office of Education and Children, and Denver City Council.

Like the smiling young faces that enter our program each year, we have much to be proud of and even more to look forward to. We hope this—our inaugural report to the community—provides a glimpse into our world of Early Childhood Education and inspires you to support our mission.

Sincerely,

Gloria Higgins
Chairwoman, DPP Board of Directors

James Mejía
Chief Executive Officer, Denver Preschool Program
knowledge

preschool

paving the way

affordable

high-quality

5

dpp
Aiming for Success at an Early Age: About the Denver Preschool Program

The Denver Preschool Program (DPP) is the result of a voter-approved ballot initiative passed in November 2006 to increase the availability of high-quality preschool for Denver families. The initiative recognizes the importance of quality early childhood education by setting aside a percentage of Denver sales tax revenue for tuition credits for families and quality improvement grants for preschool providers. DPP provides parents living in the City and County of Denver with a tuition credit to use at the preschool of their choice and offers grants to preschool providers to assist them in their efforts to improve their quality. DPP is open and voluntary for all Denver children in the year of preschool before kindergarten and includes all licensed preschool providers who agree to participate in DPP’s quality improvement system.

Since January 2007, the City of Denver has been collecting a .12 percent sales tax, the revenue from which generates approximately $11 million that is marked specifically for DPP. The City contracts operations for DPP with a non-profit corporation, Denver Preschool Program, Inc., which was created for the sole purpose of operating the program. DPP is responsible for reporting back to City Council each year on the number of children participating in the program, the quality of the preschool providers and the financial health of the program. Additionally, to maintain its accountability to the community, DPP conducts a yearly program evaluation to monitor the development of children who enroll in DPP as well as examine the program’s impact on providers and families.

In the short time since it was established, DPP has disbursed more than $17.9 million in tuition credits to Denver families, helping more than 11,000 children attend high-quality preschool. Those children have been served by DPP’s citywide network of public, private, community and home-based family providers, which consists of more than 550 classrooms at more than 250 sites across Denver.
Our Mission
To increase access to quality early childhood education programs for all City and County of Denver Children in their last year of preschool before kindergarten.

Our Vision
To enroll every eligible child and preschool provider in Denver and create a national model for quality early childhood education.

“Our daughter has benefited greatly from preschool. It really helped her with socializing with other kids and discovering routines that we weren’t able to teach her, no matter how hard we tried.”

– Eric and Kimberly Pruitt, whose daughter attended Montview Community Preschool
How DPP Works: Family Enrollment and Tuition Assistance

In Colorado, kindergarten teachers report that one in three children enters the classroom unprepared to learn. By providing families with the financial resources to send their children to high-quality preschool, DPP is helping prepare Denver’s children for success in K-12 and beyond.

Through DPP, Denver families receive a tuition credit to be used at preschool of their choosing within the DPP network of providers. The credit is paid by DPP directly to the provider, which sets its own monthly tuition rates. To be eligible, families must reside in the City and County of Denver and have a child in his or her last year of preschool before kindergarten. Tuition credits are offered to all families regardless of income level and are calculated based on family income, household size and the quality rating of the preschool. For the 2009-2010 school year, tuition credits ranged from $34-$1,250 per student per month.

### Denver Preschool Program Tuition Credit Disbursements

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<td>2008</td>
<td>$5,318,300</td>
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<td>2009*</td>
<td>$12,510,346</td>
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<td><strong>Total Lifetime</strong></td>
<td><strong>$17,942,564</strong></td>
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*Unaudited actual results, January 2009 thru October 2009; forecast November 2009 and December 2009

### Child Enrollment by Program Year

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<th>Program Year</th>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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stronger community
a brighter future
academic success
social skills
opportunity
stronger community
a brighter future
How DPP Works: Provider Enrollment and Quality Improvement

Studies show that high-quality preschool helps children build social skills and self-confidence, and gives them the foundation of knowledge they need to succeed in life. With 80 percent of brain development occurring before the age of five, children attending a good preschool are immersed in an environment that encourages learning and growth.

DPP is committed to increasing access to high-quality preschool, a principle that sets us apart from many universal pre-kindergarten programs across the nation. We also know that each child is different, so we value a family’s prerogative to select the program that best suits their needs. For these reasons enrollment is open to all licensed providers—including public, private, community and home-based, as well as part-day and full-day—that agree to participate in DPP’s quality improvement system. Any provider that is committed to quality and serves children who live in Denver is eligible to participate in the program, regardless of size or affiliation. Participating programs receive coaching and access to quality improvement grants that can be used for classroom materials and equipment, staff development and other program support, ultimately benefiting both enrolled and non-enrolled students in every classroom.

Upon enrollment, a provider must agree to participate in DPP’s quality rating system but maintains the flexibility to educate based on its own unique curriculum. DPP contracts with Qualistar Early Learning, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of early childhood education in Colorado, to administer this system and assign each provider a rating of 0 to 4 stars. Providers that receive and maintain accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) are automatically assigned a 4-star rating.

The DPP quality rating system consists of:
- An introduction to quality
- A quality rating of 0 to 4 stars
- The development and implementation of a quality improvement plan

All participating preschools are eligible to receive assistance and funding from DPP to obtain their quality ratings as well as help develop and achieve their quality improvement plans. In this way, DPP encourages its providers to continually strive towards improvement and is creating a standard for preschool throughout our community. Today, the DPP network of preschools consists of more than 150 providers with 250-plus sites across the city, each of which is focused on delivering high-quality preschool education to Denver’s children.
We know that early childhood education programs can only improve, and that children and families will always benefit from the coaching, evaluation and ratings that are offered through programs such as DPP."

– Jan Gray, Park Hill Adventure Preschool
Following voter approval in November 2006, DPP was launched with the understanding that the challenges ahead were great, but that the rewards of success would be even greater. It would be critical to measure program outcomes not only to maintain community support for the program, but also to ensure the high-quality preschool experience offered through DPP providers is affording our children the proper encouragement and training to develop to the maximum of their potential.

Since day one, DPP has partnered with early childhood education research experts to implement a comprehensive evaluation designed to help us better understand how the program is actually working and to lay the groundwork for making modifications in the future to improve the program. This evaluation is designed to:

- Monitor the effectiveness of DPP supported preschools in improving child outcomes
- Measure the number of and ease with which families are able to enroll their children in DPP partner preschools
- Track the improvement in quality and location of DPP partner preschools
- Examine the experience of both families and preschools in dealing with DPP operating procedures;
- Determine whether program requirements are being met, and;

Most importantly, the evaluation will examine developmental/academic outcomes for children who participated in the program. And because we’ll follow DPP children as they progress through the K-12 system, continued evaluation will produce additional insights into the program’s overall impacts, including how DPP children perform on academic tests in later grades and how participation in high-quality preschools is associated with greater kindergarten readiness.

The close of the 2008-2009 school year marked the completion of our second full year of the evaluation. These early results are promising: in less than three years of operation, DPP has had a significant and positive impact on providers, families and children, demonstrating that youngsters are emerging from DPP programs more prepared for kindergarten and life-long success.
Overall highlights from the DPP 2008-2009 Program Year Evaluation include the following:

**Children**
- Children participating in DPP made significant progress in both academic and socio-emotional development above expected normal growth.
- Assessments show DPP children made academic progress in vocabulary, literacy and math during their preschool year.
- Children in DPP made considerable progress in socio-emotional development, with teachers reporting significantly more positive behaviors and fewer behavioral concerns.

**Families**
- More than two-thirds of surveyed families (i.e., parents or other caregivers) report that DPP helped their children maintain continuous enrollment in preschool.
- DPP family participation increased more than eight-fold from 2007 to 2009.
- One third of parents reported they would not have enrolled their children in preschool without a DPP tuition credit.

**Preschool Providers**
- Sixty-seven preschool classrooms engaged for the first time in a quality improvement and rating process.
- Nearly all (98%) providers reported that their involvement with DPP encouraged them to improve their program, with more than a third reporting programs were improved “to a great extent.”
- By 2008-2009, more than 110 preschool providers were approved by DPP. Today, that number tops 155.
A Busy Child Preschool  
A Plus Kids  
ABC Childcare Center  
ABN Columbine Montessori School  
Academic Play Learning Center  
Agape ECE  
Amesse (DPS)  
Anchor Center for Blind Children  
AOD Blessed Sacrament  
AOD Christ the King Roman Catholic School  
AOD Good Shepherd Catholic School  
AOD Guardian Angels  
AOD Most Precious Blood Early Learning Center  
AOD Notre Dame Early Learning Center  
AOD Presentation of Our Lady  
AOD St Catherine of Siena Preschool  
AOD St Francis de Sales  
AOD St James Catholic School  
Archuleta (DPS)  
Arlene’s Learning Center  
Armstrong Child Development Center  
Asbury (DPS)  
Ashley (DPS)  
Augustana Early Learning Center  
Auntie Ruth’s Day Care  
Auraria Early Learning Center  
Barnum (DPS)  
Barrett (DPS)  
Barrett at Clayton (DPS)  
Beach Court (DPS)  
Bergamo Academy  
BMH-BJ Congregation Preschool  
Bradley (DPS)  
Bright Horizons Montessori at Denver Place  
Bright Horizons Montessori at the Marina  
Bright Horizons Montessori on the Mall  
Bright Star Early Learning  
Bright Star Learning Palace I  
Bright Stars Child Care and Preschool  
Brown (DPS)  
Bryant-Webster (DPS)  
Cachitos Day Care Home  
Calvary Temple Child Enrichment Center  
Candyland Learning Center  
Carson (DPS)  
Castro (DPS)  
Caterpillars to Butterflies Child Care  
Catholic Charities CDC  
Catholic Charities Garfield HS  
Catholic Charities Kentucky HS  
Catholic Charities Lenore’ B Quick  
Catholic Charities Little Munchkins HS  
Catholic Charities Margery Reed  
Catholic Charities Mi Segunda Casa HS  
Catholic Charities St Rose of Lima  
CCI Montessori  
CEC Early Learning Academy  
Centennial (DPS)  
Cheltenham (DPS)  
Cherry Grove Preschool  
Children Are The Future  
Children’s Chalet Daycare  
Children’s Corner Learning Center  
Children’s Haven  
Children’s Outreach Project  
Christ Lutheran Early Childhood Center  
Circle of Love  
Clayton Educare  
Cole (DPS)  
Colfax (DPS)  
College View (DPS)  
Colonnade Children’s Center  
Colorado International School  
Columbian (DPS)  
Columbine (DPS)  
Congregation Rodef Shalom  
Cory (DPS)  
Cowell (DPS)  
CP of Colorado/Creative Options  
Crayon Academy  
Creative Beginnings Preschool and School-Age  
Creative Minds Academy  
Crestmoor Learning Center  
Custom House Children’s Center  
Daddy Mom Daycare  
Day One Daycare Learning Center  
Denison (DPS)  
Denver Child Care Center  
Denver Cooperative Preschool  
Denver Montclair International School  
Dos Pasitos  
Doull (DPS)  
Dreamers Day Camp  
E & R Cannon Child Care Center  
Eagleton (DPS)  
Early Excellence@ Wyatt  
Early Success Academy  
Edison (DPS)  
El Mundo Feliz  
Ellis (DPS)  
Emmanuel Methodist Preschool  
Escuela Tlatelolco Circulo Montessori  
Fairmont (DPS)  
Fairview (DPS)  
Family Flex Early Education Center  
Family Star Montessori and Early Head Start Northeast  
Family Star Montessori and Early Head Start Northwest  
Fisher Early Learning Center  
Force (DPS)  
Ford (DPS)  
Future Leaders Childcare Center  
Garden Place (DPS)  
Gilpin (DPS)  
Gladys Campbell  
Godsman (DPS)  
Goldrick (DPS)  
Grant Ranch (DPS)  
Green Valley (DPS)  
Greenlee (DPS)  
Greenlee Extended Day (DPS)  
Greenwood (DPS)  
Gust (DPS)  
Happy Ladybug LLC  
Harrington (DPS)  
Hebrew Educational Alliance (HEA) Preschool  
Holm (DPS)  
Home Away From Home  
Hope Center, Inc.  
House of Joy Christian Learning Center  
Howell (DPS)
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<td>Real Kids, Inc.</td>
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Gloria Higgins, Board Chair
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Program Associate
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