

Cincinnati Preschool Promise

Year 4 Evaluation

2020-2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation examines the effectiveness of Cincinnati Preschool Promise's (CPP) programs, operations, and its impact on the community. CPP's mission is for families to have equitable access to high-quality preschool in private settings within the Cincinnati Public School district boundary.

Impact During COVID-19

Overall Effects of COVID-19 on Early Childhood Educators and Families:

- Forty percent ($n = 151$) of families surveyed were hesitant to send their children back to preschool specifically due to COVID-19 concerns.
- Nearly 67% ($n = 15$) of Providers stated in focus groups that they had difficulty finding enough preschool teachers to hire. Over 30% of those Providers also had difficulty getting teachers to return to work.

CPP Strengths and Supports:

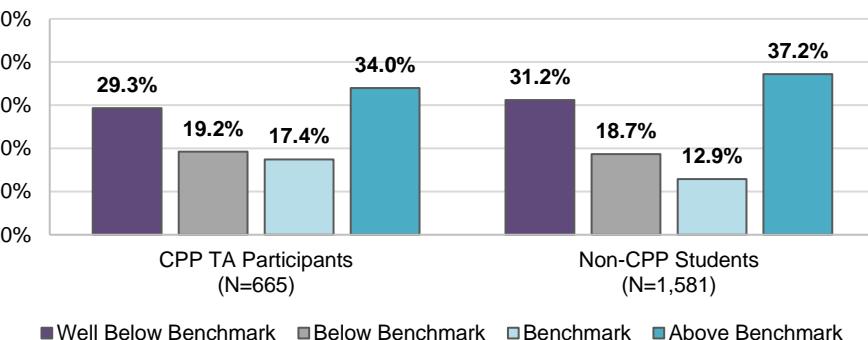
- Created an Extended Learning Session for preschoolers supporting year-round learning and will continue to support families in this manner in academic year 2021-22.
- Offered resources to Providers applying for various COVID-related government grants and aid.
- CPP Providers built trust with families with whom the Providers otherwise would not have interacted by offering critical services during the pandemic.
- SUTQ training and other professional development continued online for many teachers and Providers.

Early Literacy Readiness

Overview of 2020-21 Acadience Reading Performance

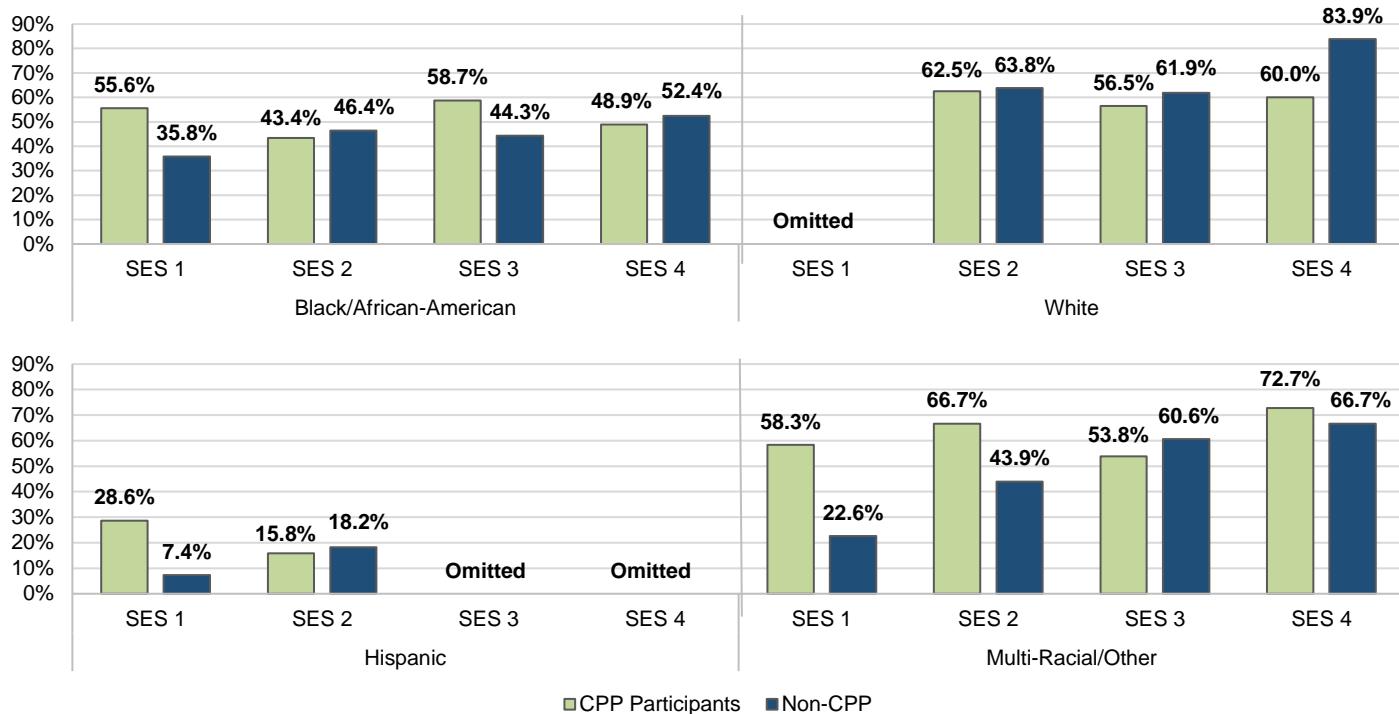
Cincinnati Public Schools administered the Acadience Reading Assessment to kindergarteners instead of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) in 2020-21. CPP TA participants (community and CPS) performed comparably to Non-CPP students, where 51.4% of CPP TA students ($N = 665$) were at or above the Acadience Reading benchmark in 2020-21 compared to 50.1% of Non-CPP students ($N = 1,581$).

Figure 1. CPP TA Acadience Reading Performance Levels (2020-21)



Consistent with results from the prior years, CPP TA participation benefits low social economic status (SES) non-white students to a greater extent than high SES students and white students (Figure 2).

Figure 2. At or Above Reading Benchmark by Race and SES

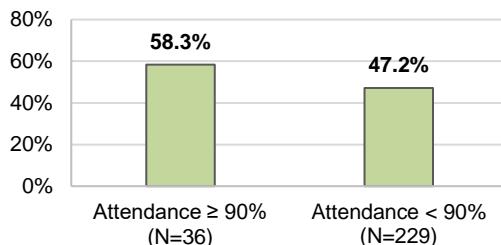


Note. Comparisons are omitted if CPP TA sample sizes (Ns) are less than 10.

Acadience Reading Performance by Attendance

Additional Acadience Reading analyses were conducted on a cohort of 265 CPP TA preschoolers. Attendance rates (total days attended/total days scheduled) were calculated using each student's most recent year of preschool before kindergarten (Figure 3). Students with preschool attendance rates of 90 percent or more scored at or above benchmark more frequently (58.3%) than those with attendance rates below 90 percent (47.2%).

Figure 3. CPP Students At or Above Reading Benchmark by Attendance*



*Comprised of student data collected from the SugarCRM database owned by MetrixiQ.

Preschooler Progress

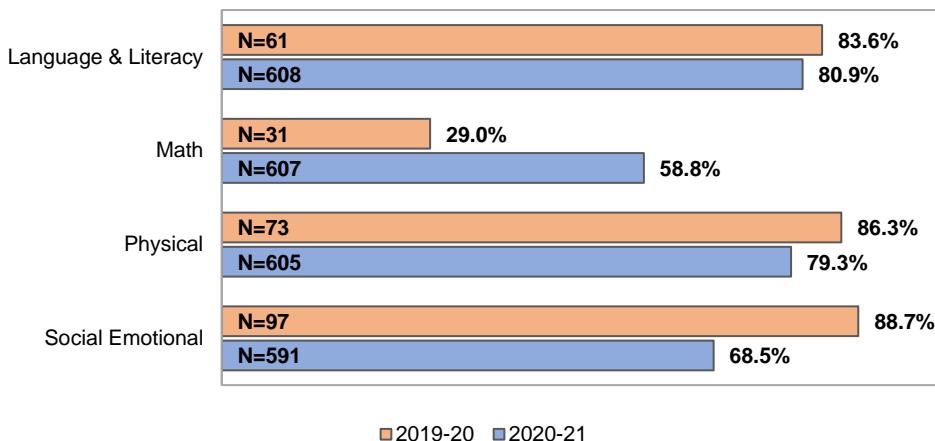
New this year, two evidence-based preschool progress measures administered most frequently to CPP preschoolers receiving Tuition Assistance (community and CPS) were incorporated into the evaluation to understand the impact of high-quality preschool experience. INNOVAT/IONS examined the overall pre-(fall) and post-assessment (spring) scores of CPP preschoolers taking the Early Learning Assessment (ELA)¹ and the Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TS GOLD®)².

¹ https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Early-Learning/Kindergarten/Early-Learning-Assessment/Early-Learning-Assessment-for-Administrators/ELA-Development-Report_Final.pdf.aspx

² https://teachingstrategies.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-Tech-Manual_GOLD.pdf

Preschool Assessment Scores for 2019-20 and 2020-21

Figure 4. Percent of Preschoolers Maintaining Proficiency or Improving from Fall to Spring for 2019-20 and 2020-21 School-Years



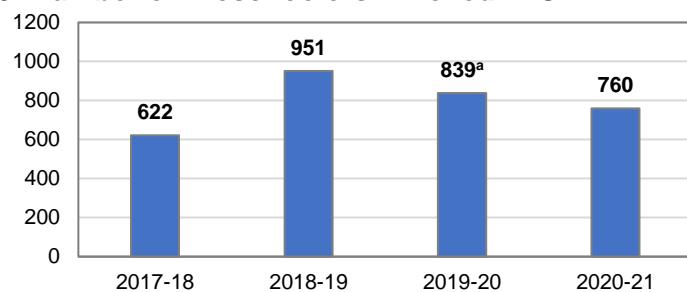
Tuition Assistance and Enrollment

Tuition Assistance (TA) preschools are 3, 4, or 5 star rated by Ohio's Step Up To Quality Star Rating System (SUTQ).

Preschoolers Receiving Tuition Assistance

The number of children enrolled in preschools receiving CPP Tuition Assistance decreased from 2019-20 to 2020-21 by 9.4% (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Number of Preschoolers Enrolled in CPP TA Preschools



Note. Students included in count if enrolled with at least 1 day of attendance. Enrollment may have been affected by COVID-19 during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school-years.

Demographics

Preschoolers enrolled in Tuition Assistance preschools were 52.0% female, mostly African American/Black (72.5%), and typically come from homes where English is the primary language (70.0%). Most of these preschoolers reside in a permanent residence (94.2%) with a total of 4 or fewer household members (68.2%).

Quality Improvement

Quality Improvement (QI) Providers are either unrated or have a 1 or 2 SUTQ star-rating. Through Cincinnati Preschool Promise, QI Providers received tangible support and coaching to improve quality and increase the number of quality preschool seats.

Quality Improvement to Tuition Assistance Conversions

In 2020-21, 30 Providers converted from Quality Improvement preschools to Tuition Assistance preschools, which represents a 36% increase from the previous academic year.

Geography and Reach

Table 1. CPP TA and QI Providers by Program Year

Program Year	TA Providers			QI Providers		
	# of Providers	# in Quality Gap Neighborhoods	Providers Added	# of Providers	# in Quality Gap Neighborhoods	# Converted to TA
2017-18	40	16	-	26	13	-
2018-19	57	26	17	106	53	8
2019-20	83	42	26	135	60	22
2020-21	114	63	31	119	45	30

Teacher and Provider Supports

Cincinnati Preschool Promise supported teachers and Providers through two wage initiatives: Teacher Promise Grants (TPG) and Staff Support Fund (SSF). These programs aim to increase recruitment, retention, and supplement wages.

Teacher Promise Grant Impact on Retention

Of the 54 Lead Preschool teachers receiving TPG in 2020-21, 23 recipients had the opportunity to complete 12 months of service. Four recipients were excluded due to their sites closing. Two of those closings were due to COVID-19 related issues and two site closings were due to non-COVID-19 related issues. Of the remaining 19 participants, 15 completed 12 months of service for a retention rate of 79%.

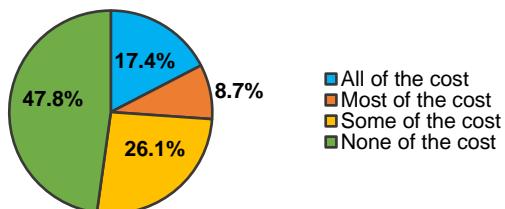
Extended Learning Session

Cincinnati Preschool Promise offered an Extended Learning Session (ELS), providing Tuition Assistance from June 2020-August 2020, to help close learning gaps that resulted from disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. CPP recognized the importance of ELS in response to parent feedback that having continuous learning opportunities was of critical importance. A total of 360 children enrolled in an ELS program in the inaugural cohort (2019-20). On average, ELS students attended 84.4% of their scheduled school days, with 50.6% having an attendance of 90% or higher. Demographic characteristics of the ELS cohort were in line with those of the general sample.

Parent Perspectives on Preschool

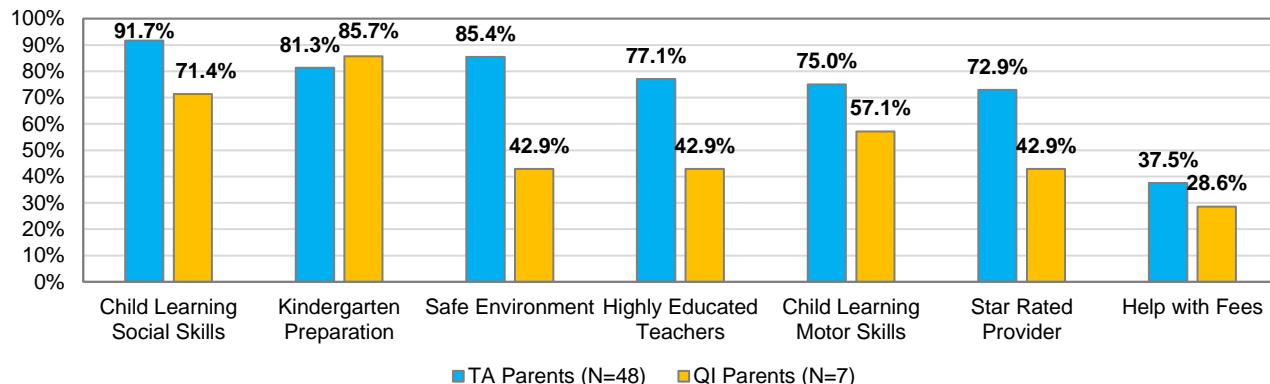
Tuition Assistance Allows Families to Access and Afford Preschool: Of parents receiving tuition assistance, 47.8% could not have afforded the cost of preschool and 26.1% could only have afforded some of the cost without tuition assistance (Figure 6). “Affordability” was also identified as a top barrier to preschool enrollment by parents and Providers.

Figure 6. Would You Have Been Able To Afford Preschool If You Had Not Received CPP Tuition Assistance? (N = 46)



Value of Early Childhood Education: Almost all TA (98.0%) and QI (100.0%) parents reported that a quality early educational experience was “important” or “very important” for their child. Kindergarten preparation and social skill development were the top two aspects of quality preschool as identified by both TA and QI parents (Figure 7).

Figure 7. TA and QI Parents Perspectives on Quality Preschool



Prospective Parents and Prospective Parents

INNOVATIONS engaged parents of preschool-aged children who are not currently enrolled in any preschool as well as Providers who are not part of the CPP network (Prospective Parents and Providers).

Survey Results

Prospective Parents and Providers Need More Information about CPP: Less than half (47.3%) of parents of unenrolled preschool-aged children had heard of CPP prior to completing the survey. Prospective parents who were familiar with CPP first learned about the initiative through “family and friends” (12.2%) or a “CPP staff member or other Provider” (10.0%). When asked, “Where should CPP share information to reach more families with young children who are not currently enrolled in preschool?” parents reported “social media” (63.6%), “doctor’s office” (49.1%), and “library” (46.4%).

Looking Forward: Next Steps and Opportunities:

Continued Steps for Cincinnati Preschool Promise

- **Inform and Engage Prospective Parents**
- **Engage and Enroll Prospective Providers**
- **Assist Providers with Preschool Enrollment Challenges**
- **Support Providers During Uncertainty**

Additional Considerations for CPP and Early Education Partners

- **Consider Kindergarten Readiness to Include the Whole Child:** Social Emotional, Physical, and Cognitive domains are critical to a child’s kindergarten readiness as well as academic preparedness. CPP should continue to examine preschool outcomes that address these domains to gauge program effectiveness.
- **Extend Learning to Prevent Learning Loss:** CPP should continue offering an extended learning session to ensure that preschoolers are learning year-round. Extended learning will also help to close any learning gaps that resulted from preschoolers missing school during COVID-19.
- **Advocate for Increases in Teacher Wages:** CPP should continue to support teachers and Providers through Teacher Promise Grants and Staff Support Funds and be an advocate for teachers and Providers receiving an adequate wage. Preschoolers will also benefit from the resulting improvement in teaching quality.