

Cincinnati Preschool Promise Program Evaluation Report: Year 3 2019-2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation examines the effectiveness of Cincinnati Preschool Promise’s (CPP) programs, operations, and its impact on the community. CPP’s two primary aims are to increase the number of kindergarten-ready preschoolers in Cincinnati and to increase the number of preschoolers accessing high-quality preschool. Additionally, this evaluation assesses outcomes associated with Tuition Assistance, Quality Improvement supports, and wage initiatives with a focus on continuous Quality Improvement.

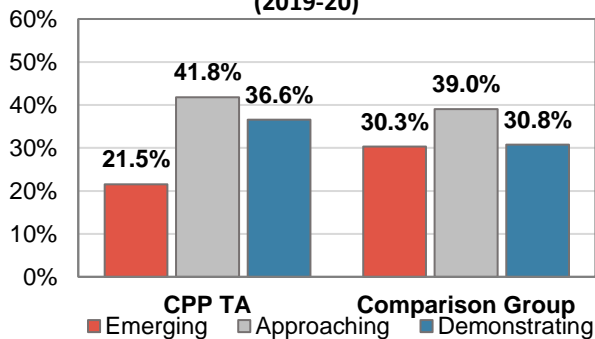
The 2019-20 year was unique as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted families, Providers, teachers, and the community in a number of ways. Although many outcomes such as applications, enrollments, recruited Providers, and Teacher Promise Grant payments were impacted by COVID-19, CPP demonstrated strength and support for families, Providers, teachers, and our community at large.

Kindergarten Readiness

The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) was administered to CPP participants who were enrolled in kindergarten during the 2019-20 academic year, after leaving their CPP preschool experience. To assess the impact of CPP TA on academic performance in kindergarten, a comparison group was selected from a pool of CPS kindergarteners who were administered the KRA in 2019-20 and had no documented participation in CPP TA. Kindergarteners who did not participate in CPP TA, but did have other documented CPS preschool experience were excluded from the selection pool. The comparison group comprised of 595 CPS kindergarteners without CPP TA from the selection pool who were matched to 595 CPP TA participants on gender, race/ethnicity, and SES quartile. The method used was a proportionate stratified random sample where the demographics of the comparison group are identical in proportion to that of the CPP TA participants. For every one CPP participant, there is one individual with identical demographic characteristics selected randomly from the comparison group (a 1:1 match).

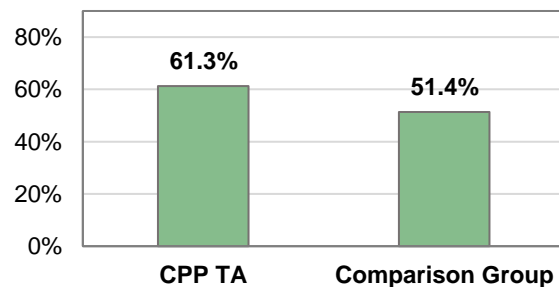
Results show that CPP TA participants scored higher on average on the overall KRA and language and literacy subtest, with 78.4% of CPP TA participants scoring either within the “approaching” or “demonstrating” performance level on the KRA, as opposed to 69.8% of the comparison group – an 8.6 point difference (Figure 1). Likewise, 61.3% of CPP TA participants met the “on-track” status on the Language and Literacy subtest (i.e., scoring at or above a scaled score of 263; Figure 2). This percentage is greater than that of the comparison group (51.4%) by 9.9 points.

Figure 1. Overall KRA Performance Levels by Group (2019-20)



Note: Emerging (low readiness), Approaching (moderate readiness), Demonstrating (high readiness)

Figure 2. Percent “On-Track” on Language and Literacy Subtest by Group (2019-20)



Figures 3 and 4 illustrate academic benefits as measured by the KRA within all SES quartiles. CPP TA participants scored within either the “approaching” or “demonstrating” performance level on the overall KRA at greater frequency than the comparison group by 6.9 points for SES 1, 13.2 points for SES 2, 5.8 points for SES 3, and 7.1 points for SES 4. Similarly, CPP TA participants were “on-track” on the Language and Literacy subtest more frequently by 9.6 points for SES 1, 14.3 points for SES 2, 5.2 points for SES 3, and 8.9 points for SES 4. In the 2018-19 analysis, KRA performance varied very little between groups within SES 4, but academic benefits of CPP TA have extended to SES 4 in 2019-20. Another interesting finding is that CPP TA at each SES quartile performed comparably or better than the comparison group of the next highest SES quartile. For example, SES 1 CPP TA students performed comparably to SES 2 comparison students, and SES 2 CPP TA students performed comparably to SES 3 comparison students.

Figure 3. Percent Approaching or Demonstrating Readiness by SES and Group (2019-20)

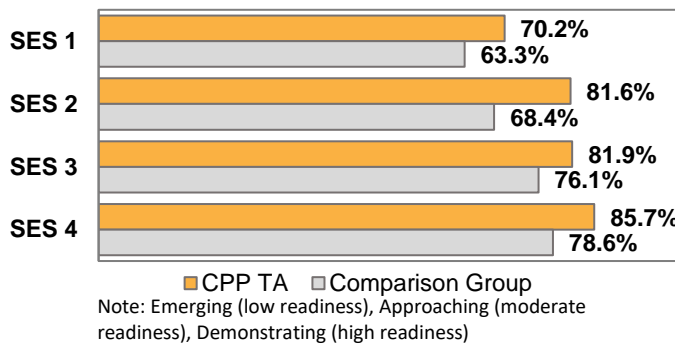
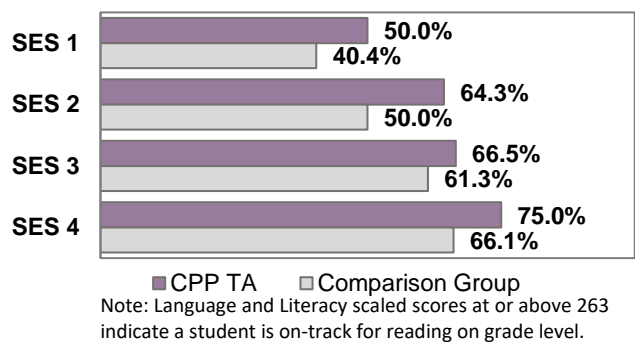


Figure 4. Percent “On-Track” on Language and Literacy Subtest by SES and Group (2019-20)



Tuition Assistance and Enrollment

Preschoolers enrolled in Tuition Assistance preschools during the 2019-20 year were 52.1% female, mostly African American/Black (72.8%), and typically come from homes where English is the primary language (81.6%). The majority of these preschoolers reside in a permanent residence (95.6%) with a total of 4 or fewer household members (65.4%). Most (75.2%) of the preschoolers enrolled are from households with an income that is less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Level.

In 2019-20, Cincinnati Preschool Promise grew its network of high-quality Tuition Assistance Providers by 29 over the previous year (Figure 5). The number of preschoolers served by TA Providers increased from 2017-18 to 2018-19 by 53% (Figure 6). Preschooler enrollment in Tuition Assistance preschools were on-track to increase again through February 2020 prior to closures resulting from COVID-19.

Figure 5. Number of CPP TA Approved Providers per Year

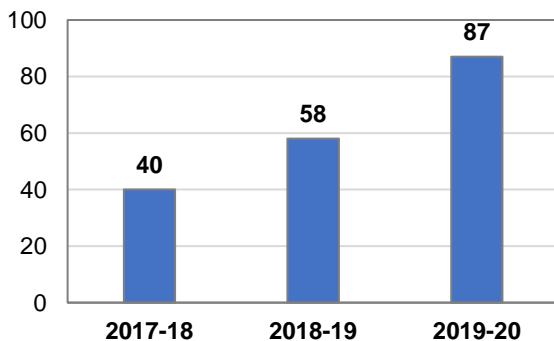
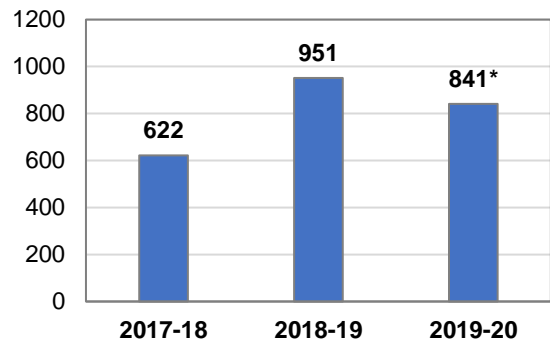


Figure 6. Number of Preschoolers Enrolled in CPP TA Preschools



Access to Quality and High-Quality Preschool

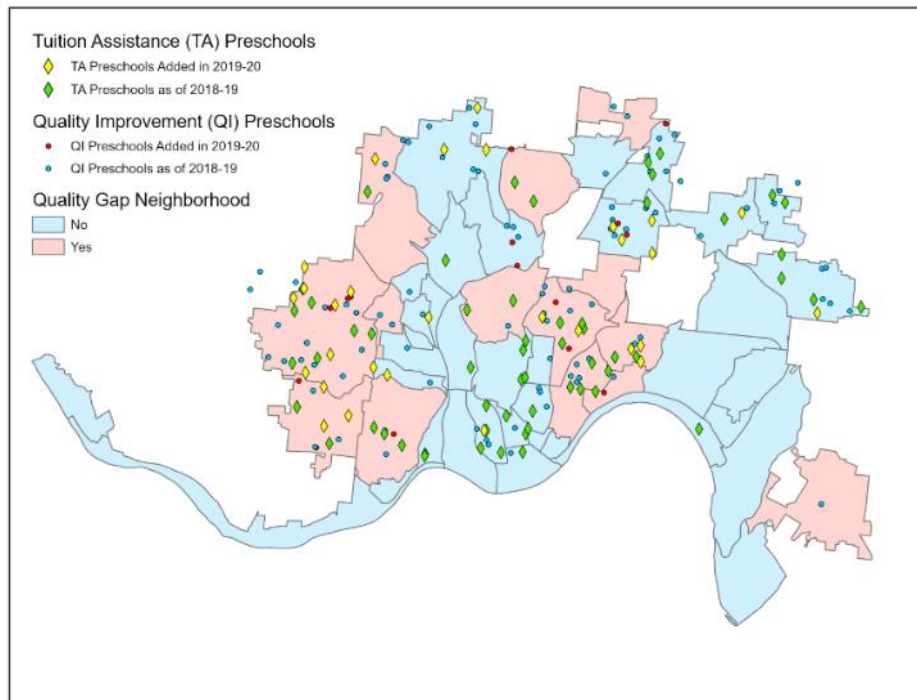
Cincinnati Preschool Promise Providers are located throughout the Cincinnati area with representation in quality gap areas. As of June 30, 2020, there were 195 Providers being served by CPP, representing 4,596 high-quality and quality seats (Table 1 and Figure 7). There were a total of 97 Providers in quality gap areas.

Table 1. Total CPP Providers

Type of Program	Current Number of Providers	Total Seats Reserved for Preschoolers
QI*	108	1,279
TA	87	3,317
Total	195	4,596

*QI Providers limited to those that did not reach high-quality

Figure 7. CPP Tuition Assistance (TA) and Quality Improvement (QI) Preschools Added as of 2019-20



Quality Improvement

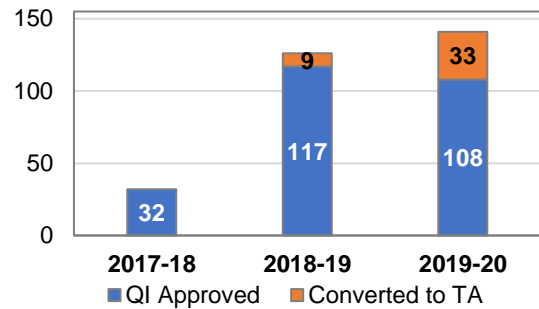
CPP’s network of approved Quality Improvement Providers grew to 141 during the 2019-20 academic year (Figure 8). During the year, CPP staff converted 33 Providers from Quality Improvement preschools to Tuition Assistance preschools, which represents a large increase from the previous academic year (Table 2). This increase is even more significant as it represents only 9 months of work since the Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) rating process was temporarily halted in February 2020 due to COVID-19.

Figure 8. Number of CPP QI Approved Providers per Year

QI Providers	Number of Providers*
Number of QI Providers on June 30, 2019	126
Number of QI Providers on June 30, 2020	141
Increase in Number of Approved Providers	15

*Total number includes Providers that have reached high-quality and includes inactive Providers.

Table 2. CPP QI Providers



Teacher Promise Grants

As a method to supplement teacher wages and support retention and recruitment, Cincinnati Preschool Promise provided Teacher Promise Grants (TPG) of up to \$2,000 for lead teachers at Tuition Assistance Providers located within the Cincinnati Public Schools District boundaries. CPP has supported a total of 57 lead teachers since program inception (Table 3), 11 of which were added in the 2019-20 school year.

Table 3. CPP Teacher Promise Grant Distribution

Provider Type	Number of Providers	Number of Teachers
Family Child Care	7	9
Single Site	9	20
School-based (Parochial)	1	1
Multi-Site	12	27
Total	29	57

Summary of Findings

Cincinnati Preschool Promise kept its promise to the community by achieving these outcomes for preschoolers, teachers, and Providers:

- **Growth in Number of TA Providers:** CPP supported the network of TA Providers which grew to 87 high-quality Providers, half of which were located in quality gap areas.
- **Growth in Number and Support of QI Providers:** The Quality Improvement program grew its network to 141 Providers. QI teachers and Providers received SUTQ coaching which led to 33 QI Providers moving up in quality to become TA Providers. CPP supported teachers in receiving professional development and provided classroom materials. Among the 108 Providers that are currently Quality Improvement, 50% are located in quality gap areas.
- **Lowest Income Preschoolers and Parents Benefitted from CPP:** Data showed the majority of Tuition Assistance dollars were provided for preschoolers residing in the lowest income households. Tuition Assistance helped parents who could not have otherwise afforded preschool enroll their preschoolers in high-quality preschools.
- **CPP Preschoolers Ready for Kindergarten Compared to Peers:** Preschoolers who received CPP Tuition Assistance performed better on the KRA than their peers who did not receive CPP Tuition Assistance.

- **CPP Supports Teachers and Providers:** CPP supported teachers and Providers by delivering Teacher Promise Grants to lead teachers to supplement wages.
- **Parents Report Satisfaction with CPP:** The majority of parents reported that they were very satisfied with the application process (80%), Provider communication (78%), Tuition Assistance (90%), and Provider options (73%).
- **CPP Provided Support to Providers during the COVID-19 Pandemic:** CPP Providers were able to gain Pandemic Certifications to provide services to essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Responsiveness and Innovation:** Given COVID-19, Providers have had to adjust ratios and operating procedures, requiring CPP to support Providers as they focused on capacity building and safety, including becoming Pandemic Providers and reopening after stay at home orders.
- **Commitment to Quality:** CPP and Providers remain adaptable as COVID-19 persists. All remain committed to high-quality preschool and increasing the number of quality and high-quality seats so that every preschooler who attends is ready for kindergarten and to succeed in life.

Next Steps and Opportunities

- **Reaching Preschoolers and Parents:** CPP is strongly committed to ensuring preschoolers and especially those with fewest resources and in gap areas, benefit from Cincinnati Preschool Promise. To do this, CPP should further enhance parent resources and information as this was identified as the top barrier to preschool enrollment by 1 in 5 parents.
- **Supporting Providers During Uncertainty:** CPP staff should continue to be responsive to Providers' needs by providing supplies and resources to provide aid and support through closures, shifts in teacher-student ratios, reopening, continuing SUTQ movement, and other disruptions and challenges due to COVID-19.
- **Promote Learning and Development:** CPP staff should continue to be responsive to teachers by offering support through online professional development, providing resources, and processing Teacher Promise Grants. Preschoolers will also benefit from the resulting improvement in teaching quality.
- **Partner and Collaborate:** CPP should continue partnering with community groups and agencies to support all stakeholders. To date, CPP has formed partnerships with the Freestore Foodbank and Amazon, to deliver food to Providers for the benefit of preschoolers.
- **Extend Learning to Prevent Summer Learning Loss:** CPP should continue offering an extended learning session during the summer 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.
- **Enhance Communication Process:** Data suggest that CPP could benefit from better communication processes to better support Providers and teachers. Specifically, with additional capacity CPP may be able to reduce response time and provide better support to Providers in reaching a higher level of quality. By implementing these ideas, CPP may broaden its impact and reach.
- **Advocate for Teacher's Wages:** CPP should survey Providers and teachers to understand staff wages and be an advocate for teachers receiving a wage of \$15 or higher.