Who Are Denver’s Children?

“When we can ensure that all Denver’s children have an equal chance at the starting gate, we can be certain they will all make it successfully across the finish line.”

— Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper

Giving our children a bright future

Denver’s young children represent an enormous pool of potential talent. Collectively, as a city, we need to realign our priorities so this promise is not wasted.

Currently:

• More than 137,000 children and youth under age 18 live in Denver.
• Close to 10,000 children are born in Denver each year. Among them: 51% are Latino, 34% are White, 10% are African American and 5% other.
• 38% are born to a mother with no high school diploma.
• 32% are born to a single mother.

Ethnicity of Children Born in Denver, 2001

Who is caring for our children?

More than one-half of Denver’s working parents need some form of early childhood care and education for their children.

Currently:

• The low-income children who need quality preschool the most are the least likely to be enrolled.
• High-quality pre-kindergarten programs offer the greatest hope for improving the prospects of low-income children and others at high risk of school failure.
• Quality early childhood care and education is not affordable to low-income and many middle-income parents. Full-day child care and education costs between $6,000 and $10,000 a year — twice the cost of in-state tuition at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

6% are born to mothers aged 15-17.
• One in five children under age 5 are poor.
• One in five school-aged children are not English proficient.
• 8 in 10 early childhood care and education centers in Colorado are of poor or mediocre quality. (University of Colorado-Denver, 1996)

• While federal and state assistance help fund Head Start, the Child Care Assistance Program, and the Colorado Preschool Program, the assistance falls far short of meeting demand.

Are Denver children ready to learn?

Children who start school ready to learn continue to do well throughout their school years.

Currently:

• Low-income children, who comprise 7 out of 10 Denver Public Schools elementary students, tend to know less when they begin kindergarten than their more affluent peers, and are behind from the start.

• Colorado kindergarten teachers report that at least one-third of their students come to school unprepared to learn. (Educare Colorado and Colorado Children’s Campaign, 2002)

• Kindergarten teachers say only 42% of children entering school recognize the difference between letters and numbers; only 40% interact positively with other children; and only 38% know how to grasp a pencil and position their writing on paper.

Percent of Students Proficient and Advanced on Reading CSAP

DPS at-risk students with quality ECE and Kindergarten vs. district average:

- Providing at-risk children with quality early childhood care and education reduces the achievement gaps that otherwise plague them later in their school careers.

It’s time to make children a top priority

Early childhood care and education is a proven investment to ensure all children make it successfully across the finish line. If we are to break the cycle of poverty and allow all Denver’s children to succeed, we need to invest in making high-quality, affordable early childhood care and education a top priority across our city.

Sources used in this summary, in addition to those cited, include:

