

CPP Stakeholder Report: Summer 2026

The Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP) recently completed its second year of implementation. As a publicly funded program that provides access to free, high-quality preschool for all Cambridge 4-year-olds and prioritized 3-year-olds, CPP helps ensure all children in Cambridge are prepared to thrive in kindergarten and beyond. During its second year of implementation, CPP served more than eight hundred children and families. This report summarizes CPP's work and impact during the 2025-2026 school year.

ADVISORY BOARDS

Last school year, the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood (OEC) worked closely with both the CPP Program Advisory Board and the CPP Family Advisory Board to gather ongoing feedback to inform policy and program decisions.

The CPP Program Advisory Board is composed of preschool Directors from across the CPP system. This group meets monthly to share feedback and to guide CPP policies and decision-making.

The CPP Family Advisory Board (FAB) consists of 10 parents representing families with 3- and 4-year-old children enrolled in the Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP), including those attending DHSP preschools, CPS pre-K classrooms, and community-based preschools. The Board reflects Cambridge's diversity in family backgrounds, experiences, and structures.

During the 2025–2026 school year, FAB focused on building trust between families and OEC/CPP providers and supporting families through accessible and transparent CPP processes. Through small-group work, discussions, and one-on-one conversations, families provided insights that have shaped OEC's work, including the need for more communication about toilet training expectations, greater introduction of program staff, addressing family members by name, and fostering reciprocal relationships with all caregivers.



Looking ahead, the Family Advisory Board aims to collaborate with OEC to develop a family feedback system and expand its membership.

Quality Benchmark Guidelines and Monitoring Policy

OEC is committed to supporting high-quality programming across all CPP preschool sites. For the 2025–2026 school year, with the help of the CPP Program Advisory Board and other key partners, OEC developed and introduced the CPP Quality Monitoring Policy, which sets clear quality standards for providers and guides the Standard Monitoring Process (SMP) to ensure consistent quality across all CPP sites. The SMP includes document review, CLASS observations, structured classroom observations, and collection of family feedback.

As a related component of this work, OEC worked with key partners to develop the CPP Quality Benchmarks. These Benchmarks reflect the national research consensus and are intended not only to clearly describe the quality expectations for all Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP) providers, but more broadly, to create a shared language for the educators and early childhood professionals of the City to use to facilitate and promote professional learning and continuous quality improvement. The Benchmarks are based on research on

best practices in early education are based on locally and nationally recognized resources and were created with input from stakeholders across the City, including preschool providers, program leaders, and early learning experts. They define the characteristics that early childhood programs should demonstrate to ensure that children experience high-quality preschool environments that set them up for success not only in preschool but also throughout their schooling. **There are five Quality Benchmarks: Adult-Child Interactions; Physical Environment; Responsive Curriculum & Assessment; Family Engagement; and Professionalism.** All five Benchmark areas are critical, and taken together they reflect the research consensus of the most important and impactful elements of quality early childhood programs. OEC will use these Benchmarks to guide our professional development programming and to inform our CPP quality monitoring efforts.



For the upcoming school year, ongoing quality support will be integrated with the benchmark guidelines and delivered through professional development, educator coaching, and director mentoring to strengthen CPP programming.

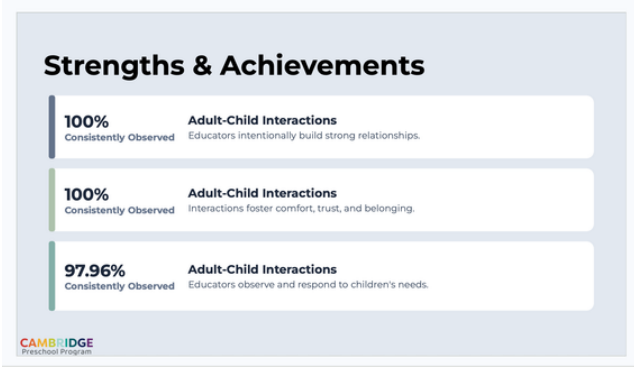
OEC remains responsible to Cambridge families and the City by monitoring quality and taking action as needed to ensure all CPP providers meet these standards.

What We Learned From The Standard Monitoring Process

OEC monitors the quality of CPP preschools through the Standard Monitoring Process (SMP), which includes document review, CLASS observations, classroom observations with the CPP Structured Observation Tool, and collection of family feedback.

Quality Monitoring Data Summary:

- During the 2025–2026 school year, OEC staff members and key stakeholders from across the City developed and introduced the **CPP Structured Observation Tool**. This tool is designed to guide observations of classroom instruction, assess compliance with program standards, and provide actionable feedback to educators and program partners. The CPP Quality Assurance team conducted observations in 50 CPP classrooms using this tool. The observation cycle confirmed that our programs offer high-quality programming and consistent educator engagement. Following the pilot observations, the Structured Observation Tool was revised to remove duplicative standards and incorporate fieldwork adjustments based on internal reliability ratings.



- CPP programs displayed a strong commitment to children's social-emotional development. During monitoring visits:**
 - 97% of educators were observed responding to children's needs
 - 95% provided developmentally appropriate guidance
 - 100% fostered comfort, trust, and belonging through their Adult-Child interactions

Strategic Successes:

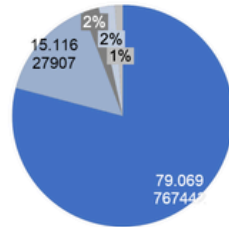
- Our analysis found that high-quality teaching practices are consistently being implemented across CPP programs. Monitoring visits showed strong performance in the Curriculum & Assessment benchmark, with **93.8% of sites showing consistent evidence of curriculum implementation.**
- The results show that CPP programs strongly focus on inclusive, culturally responsive care in preschool settings, with over **93% of programs providing exceptional environments** that are welcoming and reflective of the community's diverse identities.

- The Family Feedback Survey for the 2025–2026 CPP school year found that more than 90% of families reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their child's preschool experience, based on 172 survey responses.

Distribution of 172 survey respondents

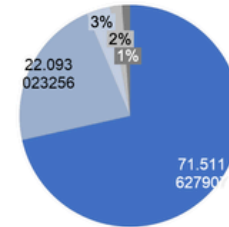
How satisfied are you with your child's preschool experience?
In %

Very satisfied Neutral
Satisfied Unsatisfied
Very Unsatisfied



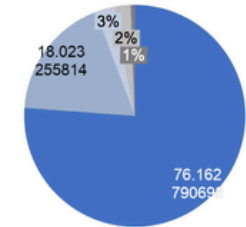
How much does your child like joining in on preschool activities?
In %

Very excited Not excited
Somewhat excited Hesitant
Neutral



How well does the preschool support your child's social, emotional, and cognitive development?
In %

Excellent Fair Very Poor
Good Poor



Strategic Improvements:

- The results indicated a need to increase the visual representation of families in classrooms to better reflect inclusive practices and engagement. Examples of this include:
 - Showcasing family traditions, recipes, or stories contributed by families
 - Incorporating family artifacts or cultural items in classroom displays
 - Featuring family events or celebrations in classroom newsletters or on a bulletin board.
- Programs will continue efforts to ensure preschool environment material choices are clearly visible, well-maintained, and easily accessible to all learners.

Additionally, feedback received from providers during the Spring Standard Monitoring Protocol Meetings (SMP) indicated that both educators and administrators who participated in the quality monitoring observation confirmed that the quality monitoring tool clearly communicated what was being assessed during observations.

Additional Quality Supports

For the 2025–2026 school year, OEC entered into a partnership with MySEL to support social-emotional learning in all CPP classrooms and help educators reflect on areas where additional support may be needed to consistently address SEL skills in their preschool environments. The overarching goal was to systematically prevent challenging behaviors in the classroom and to equip educators with effective strategies when challenges do arise. OEC will continue this initiative moving forward for the 2026-2027 school year.

What We Learned From MySEL

- **216 educators** from community-based providers participated in the MySEL initiative (98%), with **51 SEL-focused classroom visits** and **57 classroom reports** completed (96% completion). All **37 directors** engaged in meetings (100% participation), demonstrating strong buy-in, particularly for support aimed at reducing challenging behaviors.
- **Most directors found the meetings valuable**, with many appreciating the alignment between observations and their own assessments, as well as the opportunity to measure SEL skills directly. Linking resources to feedback and combining outside observation with self-assessment was especially effective.



- **Analysis of self-assessments and classroom visits identified 6 key areas of focus for educator support. These areas include:**
 - Addressing personal bias toward children’s behavior,
 - Consistent use of visuals in the preschool environment,
 - Effective implementation of daily schedules, routines, and transitions for preschool children,
 - Setting and teaching expectations for children within the preschool environment,
 - Problem-solving strategies that support self-regulation for children,
 - Comprehensive support around behavioral plans for children in the preschool environment.

Strategic Improvements:

- **The second MySEL rollout will be completed in Fall 2026.**
- MySEL Skill Booster Videos will be added to provide educators with additional resources to support their professional development.
- Programs will continue to receive support in using MySEL reports to set SEL goals and increase Tier One proficiency.
- Data trends will inform targeted professional development.

What We Learned From the Ages and Stages

The Ages & Stages Questionnaire® (ASQ®) is a developmental screening tool that is designed to pinpoint developmental progress and catch delays in young children. In partnership with the United Way Drive Initiative for the 2025-2026 school year, we determined:

- A total of **698 ASQ-3 screenings were completed** during the FY 2026 school year, including initial screens and rescreens. Among the children screened, **45%** of three-year-olds and **73%** of four-year-olds scored above developmental norms on the ASQ-3 assessments.
- Additionally, **28%** of three-year-olds and **14%** of four-year-olds fell into the monitoring category, while **26%** of three-year-olds and **13%** of four-year-olds scored below developmental norms.
- **One change for the 2025–2026 school year is that only one assessment is now required in the system, rather than two.**



During the 2025-2026 school year, the OEC Workforce Development team partnered with multiple organizations to deliver the following professional development workshops and courses:

- Scholarships for early childhood courses at Fisher College
- Neurodiversity and Inclusion in the Classroom with the Early Years Project
- Reflective Supervision Professional Learning Communities with OEC Mentors
- “The Power of Communication” with the McCormick Institute
- Mental Health First Aid with the Cambridge Health Alliance
- “Bringing Nature Inside the Classroom” with Mass Audubon
- CPR and First Aid for family childcare providers
- “Trauma-Informed Practices” with Boston Medical Center
- “Seeds of Belonging: Cultivating Equity and Justice in Early Childhood” with Dr. Traci Baxley

In addition to workshops and college courses, the **OEC Workforce Development team ran its fourth year of the Early Childhood Education Career Training Program**, which supports scholarships and internships for individuals pursuing the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. The team also hosted OEC’s sixth annual Week of the Young Child, which offered seven professional development workshops over the course of one week in April.

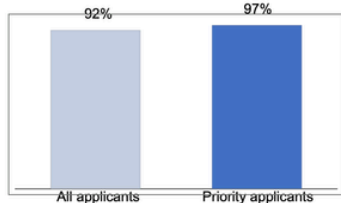
The Workforce Development team incorporated Standard Monitoring Process feedback, survey results, and the Education team’s reflections and expertise to establish professional development priorities. Recurring topics for professional development were: PD specifically for administrators; behavior management; teaching neurodivergent learners; and family engagement. These requests will be addressed in PD offerings in 2026-2027.

CPP Enrollment for the 2026-2027 School Year

Program matching | Vast majority of CPP families are matched with one of their top preschool choices, often based on factors such as location, service hours, & language

Distribution of 553 applicants for the '26-'27 school year

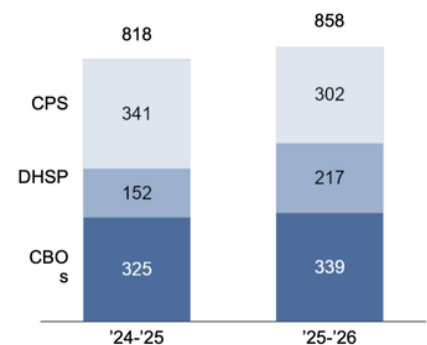
Applicants that received one of their first three choices
In %



Key factors for families when choosing providers:

- Location
- Availability of after-school care
- Curriculum
- Language used

Total CPP students across providers
In number



The CPP Program Application for the 2026–2027 school year was open from October 1 to November 14, 2025. Enrollment has continued to grow throughout the summer, as eligible children who moved to Cambridge after the application period or missed the original deadline have been enrolled. The extended application period enabled OEC to reach more priority families and provided additional opportunities for the office to support families through city connections and case management, particularly in sensitive or complex cases.

Most CPP families are matched with one of their top preschool choices, with key decision factors including location, after-school care availability, curriculum, and language. Program demand has remained relatively stable, with only a slight decrease in enrollment for the 2026–2027 school year.

Summer 2026 Enrollment Snapshots

	CPS	DHSP	Community-Based Providers
Total Enrolled	277	230	335
Total 4-year-olds	225	132	265
Total 3-year-olds	72	98	70
% Priority*	21%	57%	40%

Data Collected as of 08/01/2026

Section: Behavioral Health and Program Support Needs



In response to valuable feedback from providers and families, our Family and Community Engagement team developed new pathways to address stressors in the system and provide high-touch, critical behavioral health support in classrooms where needed. During the 2025–2026 school year, the Early Years Project (EYP) significantly revised its model, increasing its in-classroom presence and sometimes supporting high-risk cases.

To make this approach more sustainable, the team collaborated to create the CPP Classrooms Procedures for Social and Emotional Behavioral Health. This data is currently being revised, based on feedback, for the 2026–2027 school year to better address concerns raised in feedback sessions.

EYP also clarified their response plan for working with programs and provided a visual representation of their model and theory of change, illustrating how they partner with program staff and OEC coaches and mentors. As a primary partner in OEC’s Social and Emotional Learning and Behavioral Health System, **EYP made structural and operational changes**, including the development of a new database and a shift toward a more clinical model. These efforts, combined with targeted professional development and support, contributed to OEC meeting its goal of reducing suspensions and expulsions in the 2025–2026 school year.

Additionally, **through partnerships with CPS-Special Start and the Center for Families**, we hosted two information sessions, one for Cambridge parents and caregivers and another for providers, focused on special education for three- to five-year-olds, further strengthening community support and resources.