

# PRESCHOOL MATTERS



SPRING 2011

NEWS FOR DENVER PRESCHOOL PROGRAM PARTNERS & FRIENDS

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## Dear DPP Partners & Friends,

I never thought I would spend a Saturday afternoon with Denver's mayor and two llamas! But that's what happened in April when, as part of the third-annual Preschool One Book, One Denver (POBOD) program, the Denver Preschool Program (DPP) hosted a community reading at the Denver Public Library with Mayor Bill Vidal and Deborah Guarino, author of this year's POBOD selection, *Is Your Mama a Llama?*

We all know that reading is essential to children's development, which is why each year we join with several Denver organizations to host Preschool One Book, One Denver. The event this year was special because the opening reading took place at the first-ever Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference, a landmark event at the Colorado Convention Center that DPP put on in collaboration with several other statewide early childhood organizations. The conference attracted leaders from across Colorado who were interested in quality professional development and guidance on early childhood education today.



This winter, we also released the results of an independent [evaluation report](#) on DPP, and the data indicate that DPP children do noticeably better than what one would expect for typical development in preschool aged children. We request this independent evaluation every year to track our progress and to make sure our program is effective and beneficial for the children of Denver, their parents, our providers, and the larger Denver community.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of the Denver Preschool Program!

Sincerely,



Eileen Piper  
Acting Chief Executive Officer, Denver Preschool Program



DENVER  
PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

## 1st Annual Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference



*Geoffrey Canada addresses RMECC attendees.*

This year, the Denver Preschool Program helped organize the first-ever Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference (RMECC) at the Colorado Convention Center. DPP collaborated with the Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children, the Early Childhood Education Association of Colorado, and the Colorado Head Start Association to present the two-day conference in April.

More than 2,000 providers (many of whom attended with quality improvement funds from DPP), parents, health professionals, administrators, policymakers and business and community leaders attended the conference, which featured a keynote speech from Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) President and Chief Executive Officer Geoffrey Canada. Over the past two decades, Canada, a widely regarded national leader in education reform, has grown the HCZ into a program that covers 100 blocks of Harlem and connects thousands of young people with educational, social and medical services.

Canada stressed the importance of public-private partnerships in improving the quality of education in our nation, which is very much in line with DPP's core values. DPP has set an example for the nonprofit community by applying typically private sector strategies like measurable outcomes and data collection to public sector work. "This is not going to get done unless we do it together," Canada said of education reform.

"It was inspiring to hear from Geoffrey Canada," said Eileen Piper, Acting CEO of DPP. "Early childhood education has important, lasting impacts on students, families, and the entire community."

"From start to finish, the conference was exciting and new. The workshops were phenomenal and Geoffrey Canada was a real treat," said Sandy Warble, Preschool Director at Washington Park United Methodist Church, a DPP program.

Conference attendees also had the opportunity to hear a captivating speech from Dr. Jerlean Daniel, the executive director of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), where she works tirelessly to advance quality in early childhood education. In her address, Dr. Daniel discussed the critical importance of cultural competence as a pathway towards professionalizing early childhood practice.

In addition to these two powerful keynoters, RMECC also featured more than 150 workshops for attendees, helping to solidify the conference's reputation as one of the nation's premier professional development events. Many of these sessions aligned with Canada's message about private sector engagement by addressing the important role that the business and policy communities play in early childhood education. DPP presented a workshop with the Los Angeles Universal Preschool Program and the Boulder ReadySetLearn Campaign that highlighted the components of launching a successful early childhood initiative.

Given RMECC's tremendous success, DPP hopes to again work to collaborate on the conference in 2012.



**"This is not going to get done unless we do it together."**

## Provider Spotlight

Cowell ECE-4 Program is a quality Denver Preschool Program provider that received DPP's Excellence in Quality Award at this year's Early Childhood Conference.



Cowell has ranked as a 4-star Qualistar program every year since it first participated in DPP and Qualistar's rating system. Whether hatching eggs, going on field trips, or watching as caterpillars turn into butterflies, the interactive learning environment at Cowell ignites a true love for learning, which helps its students succeed throughout their academic careers.

DPP spoke with Ioanna Kendrick, the lead teacher at Cowell.

### WHAT LED YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

I wanted to instill a curiosity and love for learning in students with diverse backgrounds.

### WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH DPP?

DPP is critical to providing access to many of the families we serve at Cowell. Roughly 99 percent of our students are free or reduced lunch students whose families would not otherwise be able to afford quality early childhood education. We wanted the families we serve to have access to DPP's tuition credits.

### HOW HAS DPP AFFECTED YOUR PROGRAM?

DPP has allowed our families to start their children's education off early and in a high-quality learning environment. We are now able to serve more families and expose them to new learning environments that they may otherwise never experience.



### WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU OFFER CHILDREN/PARENTS AT YOUR PROGRAM?

From the moment a child enrolls in our program, we encourage the whole family to participate in learning. We invite parents into the classroom, take them on field trips, and teach them methods to help their children be successful learners.

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DPP is dedicated to serving all children in Denver.





"We have worked very hard to ensure that all Denver's children have an equal chance at the starting gate. The Preschool One Book, One Denver program gives the City and County of Denver an innovative way to captivate children early on so they become lifelong learners."

-Denver Mayor Bill Vidal

## Highlights from Preschool One Book, One Denver

### 1 Book:

*Is your Mama a Llama?*

### 1 Author:

Deborah Guarino, who travelled to Denver to participate in several community readings and book signings

### 2 Llamas:

Mr. Magoo and Jurni

### 24 Readings:

DPP hosted readings in 24 Denver locations

### 300 Kids:

The readings were attended by 300 local preschoolers and their families

### 1500+ Books:

Donated to nearly 600 DPP classrooms thanks to Kaplan Early Learning

Thank you to the Denver Office of Cultural Affairs, the Denver Public Library, McDonald's, Tattered Cover, The Denver Post and Kaplan Early Learning for their support of Preschool One Book, One Denver.



Denver Mayor Bill Vidal and his wife, Gabriela, read from this year's Preschool One Book, One Denver selection at the Denver Public Library.



Denver City Councilman Paul Lopez and his daughter get to know Mr. Magoo.

"It is very important for children to understand the world which they will seek to make a difference in. The ability to read a book in more than one language is a precious life-long gift."

-Denver City Councilman Paul Lopez



## DPP Kids Succeed

A testimonial from Amy Passas, parent of DPP students, Alexander and Liam

I just wanted to take a moment to thank everyone involved with the Denver Preschool Program! Two of my sons participated in the program and I'm forever grateful for the opportunities they have had to learn and grow academically and socially.

I couldn't be happier for both of them to get such a great head-start in their academic careers. They both gained so much – especially in areas I would not have been able to provide them on my own at home. They couldn't have gotten better teachers to help them navigate their first couple of years of school. My youngest son has had the privilege to learn from both Mrs. Lacy Smith and Ms. Gail Gudder at Denver Public Schools' Bill Roberts Elementary. Mrs. Smith also taught my oldest son this past year for 2nd grade (due to ECE-3 program being cut from our school). Because of her, my oldest son now actually enjoys writing and reading!

Ms. Gudder is also one of those phenomenal teachers. I talk with my youngest son and he tells me things I would have never guessed he would be capable of understanding at his age. My son LOVES school! I know because of her teaching, he really is prepared to move to kindergarten.

*Alexander and Liam Passas on their first day of school last fall.*



My two sons are finished going to preschool, but I sincerely hope Denver not only continues this program, but provides more funds and resources for it. Data can show immediate benefits like students' test scores, but there are also benefits that we will see years from now. Preschool can create better and life-long learners, which in turn helps our children be more prepared to take on tougher and more rigorous challenges in and outside the classroom. Thanks to DPP we will see children who are better prepared for school, passionate learners, and more adept in social/group settings. I wish this program many more years of growth and success.

*“My son LOVES school!”*

DPP wants to hear from you. If you have a story to share, please email [Dan Schaller at dan@dpp.org](mailto:dan@dpp.org).

## The State of Preschool 2010

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) released an annual report on the state of preschool. The report highlights state-funded preschool programs. While the Denver Preschool Program is not state-funded (and thus not included in this report), it is a publically-funded program. This report reveals some alarming data about preschool in the U.S. According to the report, “Changes in states' policies on preschool education will influence how successfully America's next generation will compete in the knowledge economy.”



### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REPORT:

- This is the first time since NIEER began tracking spending that total spending for state-funded prekindergarten programs decreased from the previous year.
- After adjusting for inflation, state funding per child declined in 19 of 40 states with programs. Nine states cut per-child spending by more than 10 percent.
- Of the 40 states that have a state-funded program, Colorado ranks 38th on state resources per child.
- Although funding is down in many states, enrollment increased by 26,996 children. Nearly 1.3 million children attended state-funded preschool education programs, more than 1 million at age 4 alone, which underscores the importance of increasing the funding and quality of these programs.