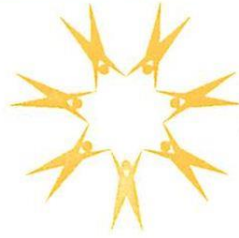


Department of Human Service Programs



sharing resources...building community

July 25, 2024

TO: Mayor Denise Simmons

From: Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Human Services

CC: Yi-An Huang, David Murphy, Dr. Carolyn Turk

While we are engaged in the search for our new Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood, I have been working closely with the very talented staff of the Office of Early Childhood as they complete the work of launching the Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP) in September. The staff have provided information about enrollment for the 24-25 school year as well as the work that is ongoing to begin the application process this Fall for the 25-26 school year. This memo is a complement to the memo provided to us by Interim Superintendent of Schools David Murphy.

Throughout this past year, Mr. Murphy and his team, the City Manager, and I have worked closely with the Office of Early Childhood to design and implement CPP. As you will see below, the launch of a mixed-delivery universal preschool system in Cambridge has resulted in more than 750 Cambridge 4-year-olds and some 3-year-olds being assigned to preschools across Cambridge Public Schools (CPS), the City's Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP), and community sites through a unified application process. In addition, as Mr. Murphy's memo describes, a number of 4-year-olds and 3-year-olds were assigned to CPS preschools outside of the CPP process through their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). We are proud of this exceptional community milestone, providing all 4-year-olds and some 3-year-olds in Cambridge with access to a school day high-quality preschool education at no cost beginning this September.

As with any new large-scale effort and system implementation, there have been some growing pains. The teams have been working hard to address issues, raised by families and program partners, that can be changed for the 25-26 school year. We will be working together during the upcoming year to determine what other changes might be necessary or possible for the 26-27 school year, for which the application will open in the fall of 2025.

The Cambridge Preschool Program is universal preschool, designed to center equity so that all Cambridge 4-year-olds and some 3-year-olds have access to high-quality preschool. Families may choose from a variety of program options through a single, centralized application process.

OEC, DHSP and CPS worked with BridgeCare (<https://getbridgecare.com>) to build the online application and matching system. In addition to the necessary application information, families ranked up to 10 preschool programs. Each preschool program has a profile with the necessary information a family would need including the program’s philosophical approach, location, program hours / extended day options, and other factors. The system’s algorithm allocated the best available seat for each child based on the family’s ranked programs and provider capacity at each program.

To date, CPP has placed all eligible 4-year-olds into programs and all priority 3-year-olds. For CPS sites, priority status was based on the child’s household income and Free/Reduced Lunch eligibility. For DHSP and community programs, priority was based on the child’s household income being at or below 65% of HUD Area Median Income (AMI). The data below will continue to fluctuate slightly as the school year goes on as a few additional eligible children apply.

Total number of CPP Applications <i>(as of 7/23/24)</i>	1067
Total number of CPP Assignments <i>(as of 7/23/24)</i>	777
Percentage of children placed by location	<p>41 % of applications received were matched to Community-Based Preschools (For-Profit, Non-Profit, Family Childcare)</p> <p>41 % of applications received were matched to Cambridge Public School Preschools</p> <p>18 % of applications received were matched to Department of Human Service Programs Preschools</p>

	CPS (priority= F/R lunch)	DHSP (priority= 65% AMI)	Community Providers (priority= 65% AMI)
Total Enrolled	320	144	313
Total general four-year-olds	175	40	158
Total priority four-year-olds	58	39	58
Total general 3-year-olds	57	21	0
Total priority 3-year-olds	30	44	97

	CPS	DHSP	Community Providers (including Family Child Care)	Total
Sites (<i>physical locations</i>)	12	7	42	61

System Adjustments for 2025-2026 School Year

The Office of Early Childhood team, together with CPS and DHSP partners, have been working with BridgeCare on several improvements for the roll out of the October application. Some of those changes include:

- Adding language to each provider profile clarifying the length of the day
- Adding questions asking families if they need extended day/summer programs
- Adding a step in the process to review families' answers to extended day/summer questions compared to programs selected on their application. Contacting the family if there is a discrepancy between what they are looking for and the programs they applied to
- Clearer communication to families about the status of their application
- More streamlined matching (adjustments to the algorithm, and tagging/labeling of seats)
- Improvements to the process from accepting a preschool placement to enrolling in a preschool.

The Office of Early Childhood will open the CPP application for the 25-26 school year from October 1-31, 2024. Families will be notified of their placements in early January 2025. The Office is working on establishing improved communication for families and for programs so that there can be a more seamless application and enrollment process.

This is the list of participating programs in the Cambridge Preschool Program for 2024-25:

Cambridge Public Schools

Amigos
Baldwin
Cambridgeport
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Fletcher Maynard Academy
Graham & Parks
Haggerty
Kennedy-Longfellow
King Open
Morse
Peabody
Tobin Montessori

Department of Human Service Programs:

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Haggerty
Kennedy-Longfellow
King Open
Morse
Peabody
Windsor

Family Childcare Programs:

C&C (Christina Smith) Family Child Care
Learning Sprouts Cambridge

2024-2025 Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP) Partner Programs

Community-Based Programs:

Al Bustan Preschool
Alef Bet Child Care
Aster Montessori

Bright Horizons – Biogen*
Bright Horizons – Kendall
Bright Horizons – Mass Ave
Bright Horizons – University Park
Bright Horizons/MIT – Kendall*
Bright Horizons/MIT – Koch*
Bright Horizons/MIT – Stata*
CAAS Head Start (both Cambridge locations)*
Cambridge Ellis School
Cambridge Preschool of the Arts – East Cambridge
Cambridge Preschool of the Arts – Harvard Square
Cambridge Preschool of the Arts – Inman Square
Cambridge Preschool of the Arts – West Cambridge
Cambridge YMCA
Campus Child Care – Botanic Gardens*
Campus Child Care – Harvard Yard*
Campus Child Care – Oxford Street*
Campus Child Care – Peabody Terrace*
Campus Child Care – Radcliffe*
Campus Child Care – Soldiers Field Park*
Campus Child Care – Western Ave*
Capucine Montessori
Children’s Village
East End House
Evergreen Day School
Garden Nursery School
Jun Zi Lan Montessori
Newtowne School
Nurtury
Rock & Roll Daycare – Broadway
Rock & Roll Daycare – East Cambridge
Rock & Roll Daycare – Inman Square

Rock & Roll Daycare – Northpoint
Rock & Roll Daycare – Porter Square
Violeta Montessori
Wild Rose Montessori
Wildflower Montessori

***These programs are CPP affiliates which means families must apply first directly to those programs and meet their eligibility requirements.**



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To: Mayor E. Denise Simmons; Cambridge City Council; Cambridge School Committee
 Cc: Dr. Carolyn Turk; Ellen Semonoff
 Fr: David Murphy
 Date: 7-23-24

Re: Inaugural Class - Cambridge Preschool Program

This memo is in response to a request by Mayor E. Denise Simmons to provide an update on the impending arrival of the inaugural class of participants in the city’s universal preschool program, referred to generally as the Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP). This information may serve as a basis for information prior to CPS and/or city representatives’ testimony before the Cambridge City Council and/or Cambridge School Committee at their August meetings.

General CPP information (Source: Office of Early Childhood)	
Total Number of CPP Applications	1067
Total Number of CPP Assignments	777
Percentage of children receiving assignment to one of family’s top three choices	90%
Percentage of children assigned by OEC to a CPS programs	≈ 41% (total of 320 students, including 3yo and 4yo CPS students)
Notes: These numbers are consistent with fall 2023 projections prior to the implementation of CPP, and consistent with historical CPS assignment satisfaction percentages and total enrollment figures.	

As of July 15, 2024, CPS enrolled 293 four-year olds and 116 three-year olds, totaling 409 students.

	Total	Assigned via OEC matching	Assigned via IEPs	Available for assignment
CPS four-year-olds	295	233	62	46
CPS three-year-olds	116	87	29	5

Primary Enrollment Takeaway: CPS will serve approximately the same number of three- and four-year old children through the CPP program as it had in the past through Junior Kindergarten, Special Start, Tobin's Children House, and FMA Scholar College (which are the programs that have historically served four and three-year-old populations).

Socioeconomic Status (SES) Distribution: The SES distribution of four-year olds enrolled in CPS for SY24-25 is equivalent to the nine-year average for CPS applicants during the January JK/K Lotteries: 74% paid lunch students : 26% Free/Reduced Lunch students. Based on the change in the administration of the school assignment process, from a CPS-governed lottery to the OEC-facilitated matching process, and on account the CPP policy objective of making access to preschool more equitable, the process included increased prioritization for children qualifying under the Free/Reduced Lunch assignment category. Consequently the SES distribution of three-year olds enrolled in CPS for SY24-25 (66% paid lunch students : 34% Free/Reduced Lunch students) is slightly different from the nine-year average for CPS applicants during the October 3-Year Old Lotteries (74% paid lunch students : 26% Free/Reduced Lunch students, which included three-year olds and four-years olds who were not eligible for Junior Kindergarten).

Looking Ahead to Future Years: Looking forward, several issues will need to be addressed in subsequent years, but based on the earlier timeline by which the initial registration window will occur for SY 25-26 as compared to SY 24-25 (the registration window will occur in October of 2024 rather than December/January), some structural revisions are unlikely to be implemented prior to SY 26-27. Possible reforms included, but are not limited to:

- Matriculation policy: should CPS continue to incorporate matriculation into CPP projections?
- Clarity and communication to families of current three-year olds who will need to re-submit residency and income information, including children assigned through their IEPs.
- Length-of-day discrepancies between CPS programs and non-CPS programs.