

SUMMIT COUNTY TUITION ASSISTANCE

A Summit County Strong Future Initiative
Annual Report for the 2023/2024 School Year



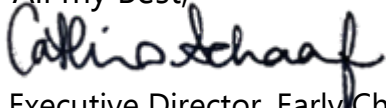
Dear Friends and Partners,

Summit Tuition Assistance is thriving. We have some major accomplishments to share with you for this program year. Summer of 2023, ECO Board and Staff were able to sign an IGA (Intergovernmental Agreement) with all municipalities in Summit County to contribute to tuition assistance. Collectively, tuition assistance is now available for all eligible children from North to South of Summit County! We surveyed participants and were able to create a new program for children ages 0-3, First Steps. With this shift, ECO is working towards the one stop shop for tuition assistance, as the State of Colorado also launched Colorado Universal Preschool for all eligible 4-year-olds in the year before they enter Kindergarten. This program provides 15 hours of free preschool for children regardless of income. This has helped us locally budget for more assistance to the children ages 3 and under. With these additional programs we have seen an increase in our numbers of children served in child care and getting closer to providing a worthy wage for our Early Childhood Teachers.

Another highlight to note for program year 24/25, in Partnership with Summit County Government Right Start Project and Copper Mountain Resort Association, Mountain Sprouts Academy opened its doors for child care in February 2024. Mountain Sprouts Academy, follows the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, which is a unique and innovative educational philosophy that places a strong emphasis on the holistic development of children. A ribbon cutting in spring of 2024 was well attended bringing an additional 40 child care slots available in our community.

ECO is proud of the community's commitment to providing this much needed community service to our young families in Summit County. We look forward to continuing our mission of improving the quality, affordability and accessibility of early childhood education in Summit County.

All my Best,



Executive Director, Early Childhood Options



SUMMIT COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS

11 Years

Average number of years First Steps & Summit Pre-K parents have lived in Summit County.

\$5,812

Average amount First Steps & Summit Pre-K families saved in tuition costs annually.
Annual savings ranged from \$181 to \$17,921.

64%

Average percentage of tuition assistance our First Steps & Summit Pre-K families qualified for which ranged from 5% to 100%

Of the **757** 0–5-year-old preschoolers in Summit County **62%** of the slots are fully or partially funded through Summit County Tuition Assistance. This percent includes **218** children enrolled in First Steps and **251** children enrolled in Summit PreK. The additional slots are fully or partially funded through:

Head Start: a federally funded program that provides early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and families. Head Start programs are available at no cost to eligible families.

- **Head Start** (ages 3-5): 35 children enrolled at 4 Summit School District schools and 4 Community Based Childcare Centers
- **Early Head Start** (ages 0-3): 14 children enrolled at 4 Community Based Childcare Centers
- **Early Head Start & Clayton Early Learning:** As an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) grantee, Clayton Early Learning partners with child care programs in Denver, San Luis Valley/Alamosa, Eagle and Summit Counties to provide resources and support the delivery of comprehensive services for families and children ages birth to 3 years. Summit County has 11 children enrolled in this program at 2 Community Based Childcare Centers.

Colorado Universal Preschool (UPK):

- Locally managed by **Early Childhood Options** & Summit County Government
- Total 23-24 payments: \$1,341,603.74
- Total Children Served: 236

The Summit County Child Care Assistance Program: provides financial assistance to eligible families for child care costs. From September 2023- August 2024 Summit County CCCAP served an average of 37 children a month for a total of \$511,980.00 for the 12-month period. (That is an average of \$42,655 per month.) Please note this data is for all children Summit County CCCAP serves, in home and centers, as breaking out 0–5-year-olds is not available.

Introducing First Steps to the SCTA Family!

PROGRAM DETAILS

Summit First Steps Ages 0-3 offers financial assistance to families living, working and utilizing childcare in Summit County. The purpose of First Steps is to assist families with the cost of childcare so that parents can remain in the local workforce while their children attend childcare. First Steps is governed by a Child Care Tuition Assistance Board and administered by a local non-profit, Early Childhood Options (ECO).

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR FIRST STEPS TUITION ASSISTANCE

- Age Eligibility: Participating child's birthday must be on or after October 1 of the program year they are applying for.
- Child must be enrolled in a qualified childcare program. A qualified childcare program can be a childcare center or family childcare home. Program qualifications are:
 - Childcare program must have a childcare license in good standing from the Colorado Department of Human Services, and
 - Childcare program must have a Colorado Shines Quality rating of 2 or above ([Current SCTA Provider List](#))
- Annual household income must be at or below \$210,000.
- Household assets do not exceed \$225k (excludes primary residents, college funds and retirement funds).
- At least one member of the household is required to work 30+ hours per week, for a business located in and serving Summit County.
- To access assistance for a full-time childcare schedule (4 or 5 days/ week), both parents must work 30 + hours / week and have a combined annual household income capped at \$210,000.
- Self-employed applicants must maintain an average income that exceeds their business expenses and must show that his/her taxable gross income divided by the number of hours of care used for the employment activity equals at least the current Federal Minimum Wage.



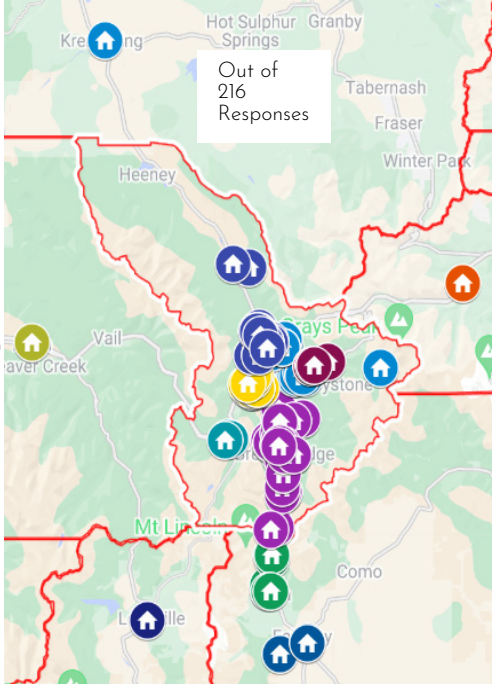
"As a working mother , I cannot express enough how vital the tuition assistance is for my family. Without it, my children would not have access to quality daycare, and I would be forced to leave the workforce to care for them. This assistance has allowed me to continue working while knowing my child is in a safe and nurturing environment, setting them up for success in the future. It truly makes a difference for families like mine, and I am grateful for the support it provides."

--First Steps Parent

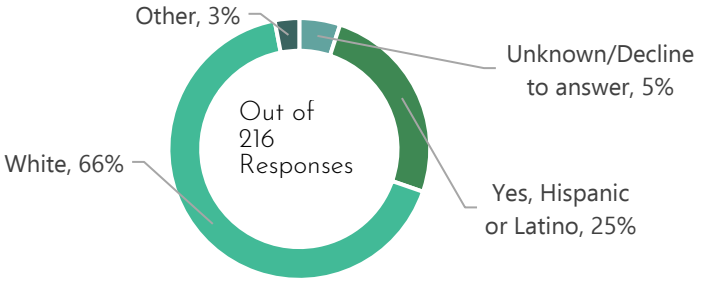
First Steps WHO WE SERVE

Where FS Families Live

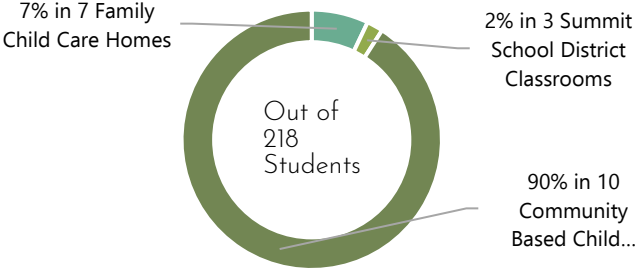
- Breckenridge - 30%
- Silverthorne - 24%
- Dillon - 23%
- Frisco - 10%
- Alma - 4%
- Keystone - 4%
- Copper Mountain - 2%
- Fairplay - 2%
- Avon - 1%
- Blue River - 1%
- Georgetown - 1%
- Kremmling - 1%
- Leadville - 1%



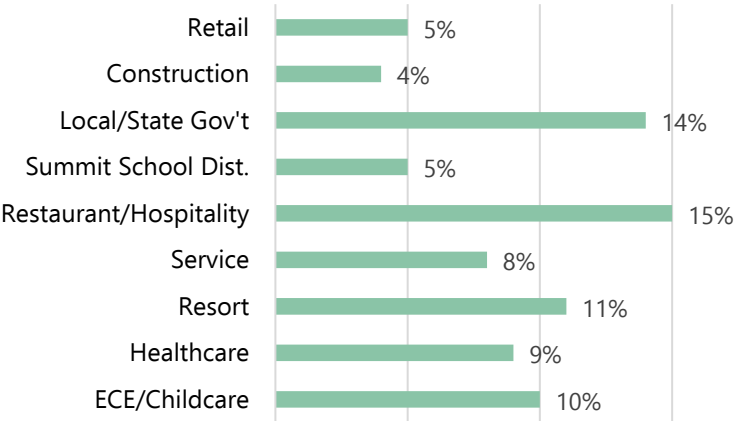
Race & Ethnicity of FS Students



Distribution of FS Students

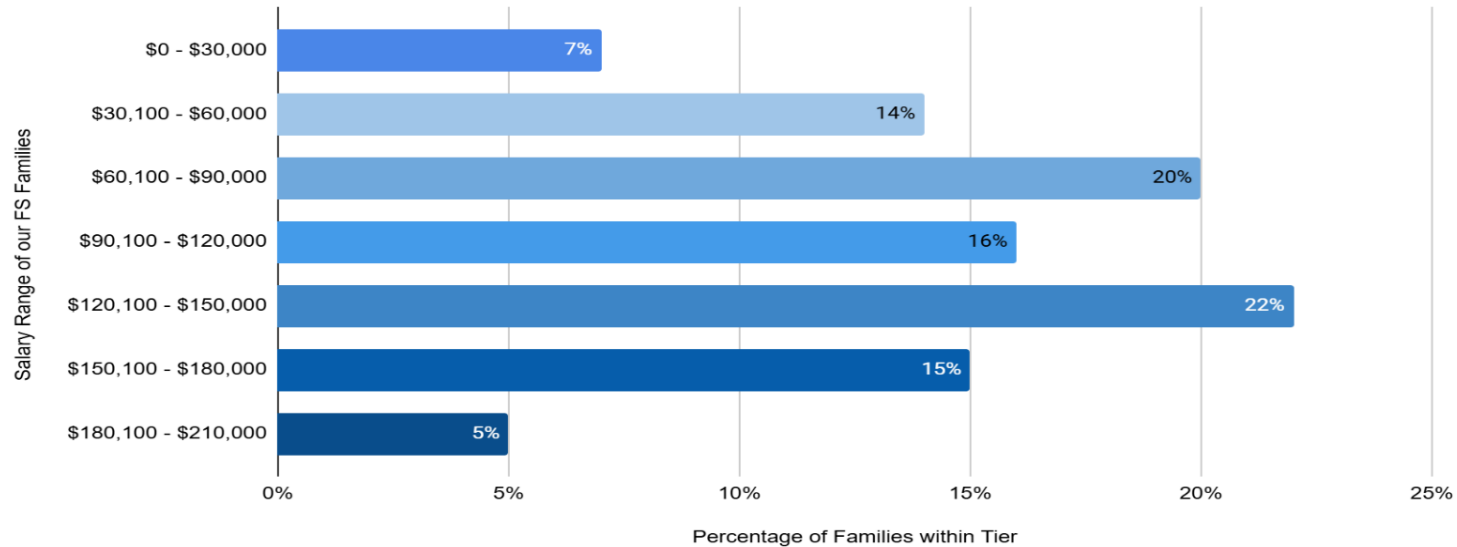


Top Industries for FS Families



FS Families Annual Salary Range Based on Federal Poverty Level (FPL) Percentages

In 2023, the minimum sufficient income for a family of 4 was \$30,000 according to federal governmental standards



Celebrating 5 Years of The Summit Pre-K Program!

PROGRAM DETAILS

The [Summit Pre-K Program \(SPK\)](#) has served **536 children** over the past 5 years! SPK helps to make high quality preschool possible for all Summit County 3- and 4-year-olds in the year before they enter Kindergarten. Approved by voters in 2018, SPK is a Summit County taxpayer funded initiative. The local council, [Early Childhood Options](#) (ECO), serves as the managing agency. A community advisory board provides guidance and direction in the implementation of SPK.

To offset the high cost of quality preschool, SPK provides monthly tuition credits to families who meet the criteria below. Tuition credits are given to assist families with the cost of preschool and are paid directly to the participating preschool program, child care center or family child care provider on behalf of the eligible child(ren). Tuition credits are administered on a sliding scale.

Tuition credit funding levels are based on:

- Gross Family Income
- [Colorado Shines](#) quality rating (only programs Level 2 or higher are eligible to participate)
- Enrollment in other programs such as [Head Start](#), [CCCAP](#), and/or [Colorado Universal Preschool \(UPK\)](#) is funded by the County, the [Board of County Commissioners](#) (BOCC) is the oversight body. ECO manages the overall program. SPK funds a full-time Early Childhood Education Registrar position, housed at the [Summit School District](#), to coordinate data collection and reporting at the child, classroom and aggregate levels. ECO coordinates coaching and quality improvement support to teaching staff, in partnership with the Summit School District Preschool Coordinator. This robust partnership with the County, ECO and the School District was designed to ensure a high quality and accountable mixed delivery system.

"The tuition assistance my family has received through ECO has been pivotal for us to be able to send both of our children to preschool. I am confident our kids are learning not only academic skills and knowledge but also social skills through interaction with their peers.

Without the tuition assistance, sending both of our small children to preschool 4 days a week would simply not be possible. With it, my kids can go to school with their friends and their wonderful teachers while their parents are able to serve their community at their chosen professions. We are forever grateful to the EOC tuition assistance we have received."

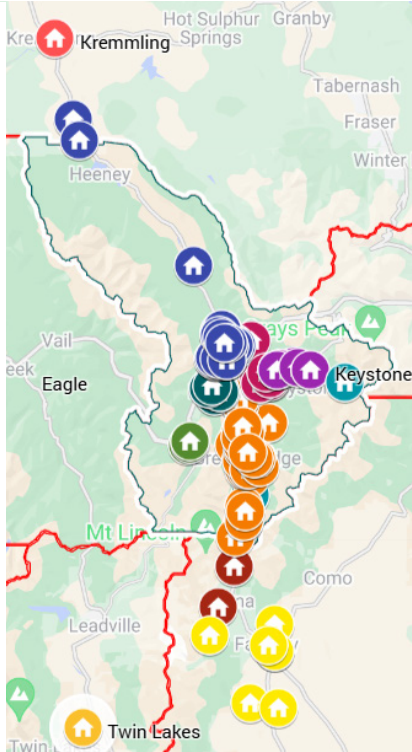
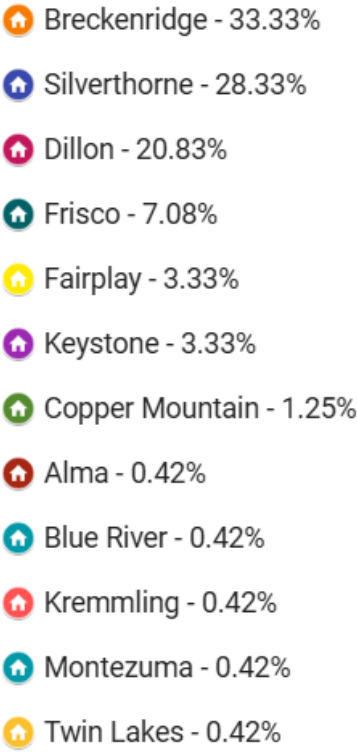
--SPK Parent



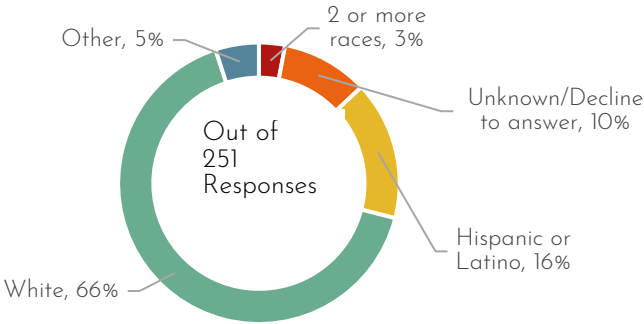
Summit Pre-K

WHO WE SERVE

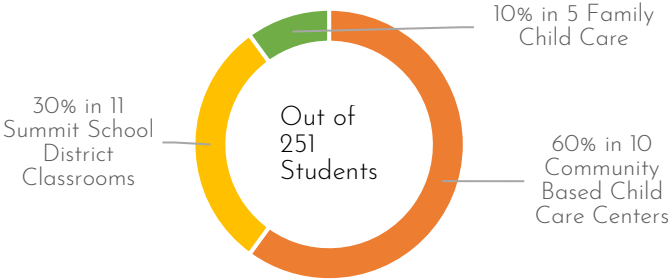
Where SPK Families Live



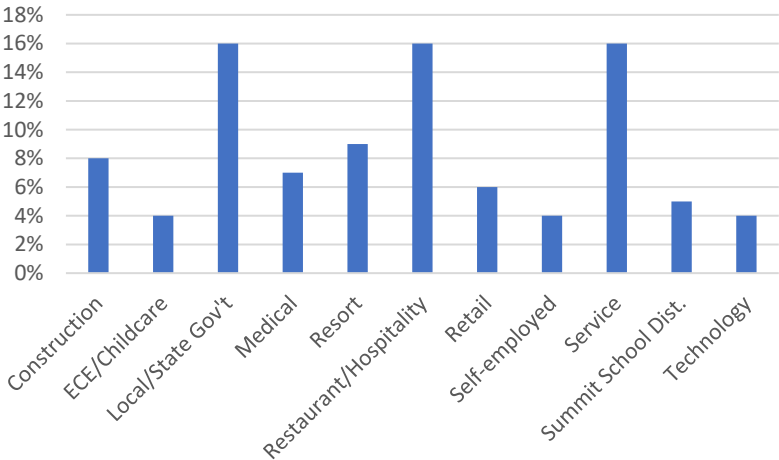
Race & Ethnicity of SPK Students



Distribution of SPK Students

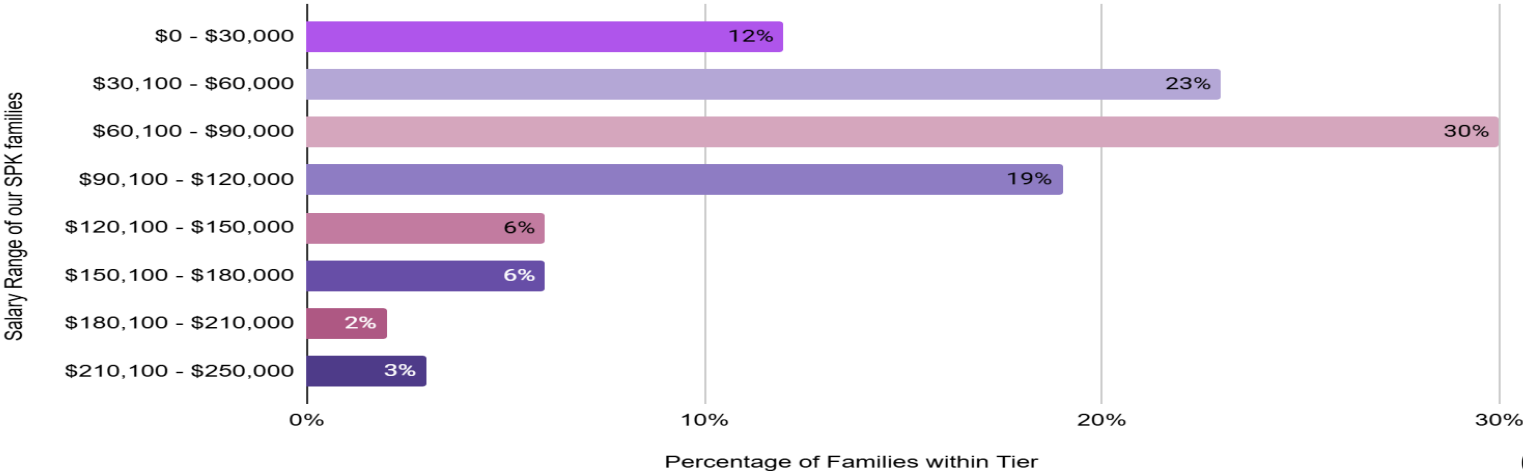


Top Industries for SPK Families



SPK Families Annual Salary Range Based on Federal Poverty Level (FPL) Percentages

In 2023, the minimum sufficient income for a family of 4 was \$30,000 according to federal governmental standards



Interview with Sarah Young, Executive Director of Timberline Learning Center in Breckenridge

By Kim Guarino, Early Childhood Registrar at Summit School District



What is your background?

I have been in Early Childhood Education for over 10 years. I have a bachelor's degree and I'm seeking a master's degree in business administration so I understand both the business and development side and the need of childcare in our community.

What are your most enjoyable moments as a Director?

First and foremost, stepping away from my office and getting in the classrooms. I have found that stepping into this role I'm a little bit removed from engaging with the kids and I love my purpose of operating this facility. We work in such a tightknit community and for families to be able to be in our workforce and trust that their kids are not only safe but getting a great education starting at such a young age. All of these pieces together really serve the purpose of why I do what I do.

What are some of the harder moments?

Looking at families that struggle to pay tuition and I'm wanting a more diverse population in Timberline. We're not Head Start so we don't have to meet those requirements, but I want to. Typically, we've served a certain demographic and I'm really shifting that in my role as executive director to reach out to all families within our community.

What would you like the community to know or more specifically the County Commissioners to know about Early Childhood?

Early Childhood Education as a whole is shifting and developing and growing and the importance of education in these younger years - it sets the foundation for a love of learning and routines and schedules, and the overall importance of early childhood education is growing nationwide. For families to be able to stay in our community, both partners in a family need to be working.

What is your biggest goal for the upcoming year?

My biggest goal is to get a more diverse population within these walls to serve families of all demographics. I don't want to just serve the families that can afford it, I want to outreach to families that Timberline is affordable. Through the different forms of tuition assistance that you can use: First Steps, SPK, UPK, CCCAP to help offset that cost for families. I don't want cost to be a barrier for families for childcare, every single family in this community deserves a right to high quality education and I want them to know that Timberline will be there for them, that's the biggest one.

PROGRAM GOALS

- * [CLASS@](#) assessments 2 times a year & [TS Gold assessments](#) 3 times a year in participating centers.
- * Professional Development through [Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System](#) (PDIS). A one-stop online resource for training related to early care and learning. PDIS offers a broad array of e-learning courses addressing all aspects of child development, health and safety, and quality instruction. PDIS is designed to support a variety of early childhood professionals at all levels of experience and education.*
- * Provide education of local programs to hard-to-reach populations.
- * Completed Fall of 2023 – [Wildflower Nature School](#) A new childcare center built in partnership with the Town of Silverthorne and the Summit County Government! This Center serves Early Head Start, Head Start and Summit County Tuition Assistance families.
- * Opened February 2024 – [Mountain Sprouts Academy](#) Located in Copper Mountain, Mountain Sprouts Academy offers the opportunity to accommodate the unique schedules of local employees and residents. The preschool follows the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. This approach is a unique and innovative educational philosophy that places a strong emphasis on the holistic development of children.
- * The [Menu of Quality Services](#) is a series of training opportunities offered by Early Childhood Options (ECO) for local ECE Professionals. According to Catherine Schaaf, the Executive Director of ECO, the goal of the program is to *“Keep elements of quality in the forefront of our interactions with Right Start and SCTA partners. Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support are the pathways to ensuring that all children learn. We promise to invest in educators because they are preparing our youngest learners for success in kindergarten and beyond.”*



new for
23-24!!



UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

Colorado Universal Preschool

In the 2022 Legislative Session, HB22-1295 established Colorado Universal Preschool to offer voluntary, high-quality universal preschool to every Colorado child in the year before kindergarten. The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) is charged with operating the program to enable families to choose from a mixed-delivery system of high-quality preschool settings, including licensed community-based programs, school-based programs, and licensed home providers. High-quality preschool has demonstrated positive outcomes for children and families in the short and long-term. *

*Author unknown. (n.d.). *Universal preschool Colorado*. Universal Preschool Colorado | Colorado Department of Early Childhood. <https://cdec.colorado.gov/universal-preschool-colorado>

"The first year, Colorado went from 26th in the country in preschool enrollment to 8th in the country in preschool enrollment. We're hoping to hit the top five next year," Polis said. "So that's just the difference that universal preschool made."

Longwell, A. (2024, March 27). *Preschoolers in Vail and Edwards get a visit from Colorado's governor* <https://www.vaildaily.com/news/polis-vail-universal-preschool-visit/>

Summit County had 100% participation in Colorado Universal Preschool including: 10 Community Based Child Care Centers, all 11 Summit School District classrooms and 11 Family Child Care Homes

TS GOLD DATA

The assessment model used in GOLD follows widely held expectations for children from birth through third grade and enables a whole-child approach to assessment. *

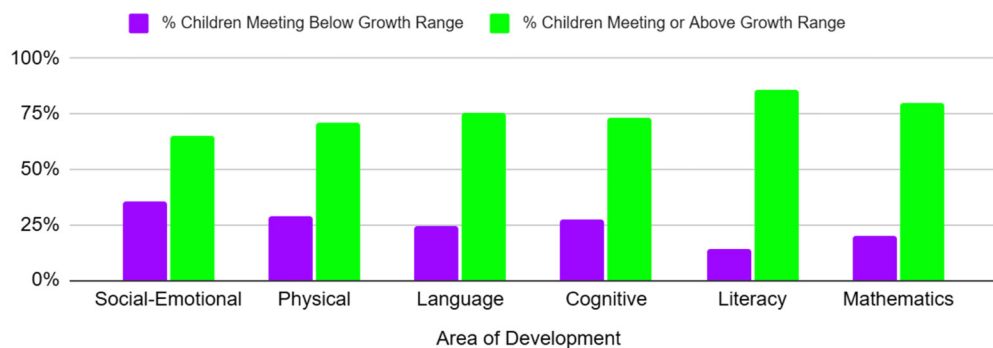
*Understand Each Child's Needs Based on Developmentally Appropriate Milestones (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://teachingstrategies.com/product/gold/>

Growth Data looks at the movement of *GOLD* checkpoint ratings across the progression of development and learning that typically takes place over the course of a school year. ***All children's knowledge, skills, and abilities may not meet widely held expectations by the end of the school year, but all children should make progress toward their next developmental milestone.*** Because growth expectations are based on a full school year, not on a checkpoint period, the Growth (Birth through Third Grade) Report was generated at the end of the school year to evaluate the growth that took place throughout the year. *

*<https://teachingstrategies.my.site.com/portal/s/article/How-do-I-interpret-the-Growth-Birth-Through-Third-Grade-Report-in-MyTeachingStrategies?r=0&ui-knowledge-aloha-components-aura-components->

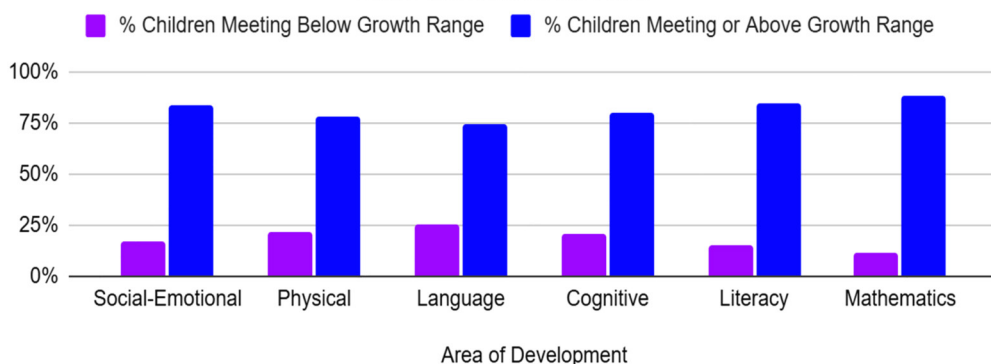
Countywide 3 Year-Old Growth Summary from Fall 23 to Spring 24

Out of 111 children screened



Countywide 4 Year-Old Growth Summary from Fall 23 to Spring 24

Out of 138 children screened



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The Summit Pre-K Team Includes:

Catherine Schaaf, Executive Director | Early Childhood Options

Michelle Mahoney, Tuition Assistance Manager | Early Childhood Options

Kimberly Theller, PhD, Operations Director | Early Childhood Options

Jessee Blumentritt, Quality Improvement Manager | Early Childhood Options

Kim Guarino, Early Childhood Registrar | Summit School District