

CAMBRIDGE

Preschool Program

Cambridge Preschool Program Provider Guide SY 2025-2026

Mission

The mission of the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood is to connect the city's early childhood ecosystem, align early childhood services and information, and advocate for and advance the needs of all young children, their families, and the early childhood workforce.

Vision

Every child and family in Cambridge has access to high-quality early care and education experiences. As a result, all children enter school ready to thrive academically, physically, socially, and emotionally and continue to do so through third grade and beyond.

Cambridge Preschool Program:

The Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP) is designed to ensure that all young children in Cambridge are prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond through the provision of high-quality preschool programming. This publicly funded program provides free, school-day, school-year preschool within a mixed-delivery system, to all four-year-olds (and some three-year-olds) in preschool programs across the city, including the Cambridge Public Schools Department (CPS), the Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP), and the broader community.

The Cambridge Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is the lead organization in the collaborative design, development, and implementation of CPP. This CPP Provider Guide outlines expectations, requirements, and supports associated with CPP partnership. Programs are expected to adhere to all requirements in this guide, unless otherwise noted, and must demonstrate compliance in order to receive CPP funding.

Table of Contents

Section 1: General CPP Provider Requirements	4
Program Hours, Duration, and Closure/Calendar	4
Standard Monitoring Protocol	4
Administrative Requirements	4
Child and Family Information Privacy	4
CPP Provider Types	4
Rates and Payments	5
Billing & Invoices	5
Mid-Year Enrollments: Billing Procedures	7
Compliance with Outside Agencies	7
EEC Vouchers and Contracts	7
Financial and Programmatic Requirements	8
Research and Evaluation	8
Section 2: Application and Enrollment	8
Eligibility for CPP	8
CPP Application	9
CPP Seat Allocations	9
CPP Application Timeline	10
CPP Application: Marketing and Communications	11
Ongoing Enrollment Policy	13
CPP Transfer Policy	13
Attendance Policy	14
Section 3: CPP Educator and Staff Credential Requirements	16
Educator Credentials	16
Administrator Credentials	17
Education and Career Pathways	18
Professional Development	19
Salaries	19
Hiring, Performance Management, and Termination	20
Section 4: Program Quality	20
Licensing	20
Classroom Staffing, Group Size, and Ratios	20
Quality Rating and Accreditation	21
Coaching and Mentoring	21
Curriculum	22
Child Assessment	22
Developmental Screening and Checkpoint Assessments	22

Preparing for Transitions	23
CPP Program Quality Monitoring	23
Mandated Reporting	24
Suspension and Expulsion	24
Section 5: Family Engagement	26
Helpful Resources	26
OEC Family & Community Engagement Team	26
The CPP Toolkit	27
Cambridge Public Schools - Special Start Program	27
The Early Years Project - Riverside Community Care	27
Center For Families	27
Community Engagement Team	28
Translation and Interpretation Services	28
Glossary	28
Definitions	28
Acronyms	29
Early Childhood Program Settings	29

Section 1: General CPP Provider Requirements

Program Hours, Duration, and Closure/Calendar

All CPP programs are required to provide a minimum of a 6.5-hour school day for a minimum of 180 days per year. CPP sites are not required to follow the CPS calendar; however, programs will be required to submit an annual calendar that identifies their days of operation and program closure days (including professional development days) to OEC.

Standard Monitoring Protocol

As part of the Standard Monitoring Protocol (SMP) process, all CPP providers are required to meet annually with a member of the OEC staff to review program compliance documents and information, complete a self-assessment, and plan for the following year. Prior to these SMP meetings, CPP providers will be asked to submit relevant documentation.

Administrative Requirements

All CPP sites are required to maintain and provide OEC with copies, annually, of the following documents and policies. Any changes or updates made to these documents during the year must be reported to OEC as part of the SMP process or as those changes are made during the year.

- An Employee Handbook
- A Family Handbook
- EEC License
- Documentation of Additional (non-CPP) Funding for CPP Students
- Educator Salary Scales
- Program Calendar
- Curriculum Verification or Crosswalk
- Daily Schedule
- Examples of Assessments
- CQIP Documentation

Child and Family Information Privacy

All CPP providers must follow all relevant state and federal guidelines to protect the privacy of students and families. Programs must also establish clear security practices for the handling and management of student data.

CPP Provider Types

CPP includes preschool seats in CPS, DHSP sites, and community-based sites. Among the community-based providers, a small number of sites are designated “Affiliate providers”, which cater to specific populations—those with university affiliations or employer affiliations.

Rates and Payments

All community-based CPP providers (including Affiliate providers) are reimbursed on a monthly basis for the total number of CPP children enrolled in their programs. For SY 25-26, CPP providers will be reimbursed at a rate of \$31,281 for each CPP-filled seat for 6.5 hours of daily programming per child, September through June.¹ An additional \$193 per month will be reimbursed for any enrolled CPP child with priority² status who participates in extended-day programming. Similarly, for the summer months (July / August), CPP will reimburse \$3,321 per month for full months of full day (extended day) programming, or \$766 per week for partial months, and will reimburse \$3,128 for full months of 6.5 hour/day programming, or \$722 per week for partial months, for priority students. *Note that only priority students are eligible for tuition reimbursement for summer programming.*

Additional Fees:

- **CPP providers may not charge any additional fees for CPP children with priority status.**
- Providers may not charge any CPP family an additional fee or copayment for school-day/school-year programming.
- Providers may charge families of general (non-priority) children fees for extended hours and/or summer programming if the provider provides advance notification to the families. However, the fees charged to CPP families must not exceed fees charged to non-CPP families, and, in alignment with CPP's goals to ensure accessibility to families, providers should work to ensure that their extended day costs are not prohibitive for families with incomes between 65%-100% AMI.

Billing & Invoices

The process for invoicing and payment for the school year will begin each fiscal year, starting on July 1 for CPP children. Program providers will be given a template to reuse each month. An updated template will be provided if any enrollment changes occur. Invoices can be submitted to the Operations Manager as soon as the last service day of the month, but no later than the 15th of the following month. The OEC Operations Manager will then review and send the invoice to the City of Cambridge Fiscal Department, and a payment will generally be processed within two weeks. Please be

¹ The CPP reimbursement rates were determined by analyzing current market rates across Cambridge and by referencing the NIEER ["cost of quality" calculator](#). Using the NIEER calculator, the projected cost of quality for Cambridge was then determined based on the cost of living in the Boston Metropolitan area. Because CPP holds high standards for quality, including pay parity for educators, the CPP reimbursement rates are significantly higher than tuition costs for most preschool programs in the city and the region.

² Children and families have priority status if the family income is at or below 65% of AMI, if the family is experiencing homelessness, or if the child is in foster care. For CPS students, priority status is determined by the family's eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch.

mindful that payment is for the previous month's enrollment, and late invoices may cause an interruption in payment.

The first page of the two-page invoice reflects the payment amount based on the utilization of each type of slot. Providers must fill in the highlighted areas:

- Billing month
- Billing date
- # of children utilizing School Day/ School year (6.5 hrs)
- # of **priority** children utilizing Full Day/full year (no general children)

The second page of the invoice lists the child's name and type of slot. OEC will provide:

- Child's Name
- Type of Slot (Priority or General)

Providers will be required to provide:

- Child attendance data
- Notes about additional information to include reasons for extended absences, withdrawal & start dates, and voucher status

CAMBRIDGE Preschool Program		CPP Invoice	
Month:		PO#:	
Billing Date:		Vendor #:	
Preschool Name			
Address			
Address			
Contact Name:			
Contact Email:			
Contact Phone No.:			
Contact Fax:			
Bill to:			
Cambridge Office of Early Childhood			
Attention: Dawn Grassi			
School -day/year	5	\$3,128.00	\$15,640.00
Extended	2	\$3,321.00	\$6,642.00
Total Payable:			\$22,282.00
<i>Please make all checks payable to: Preschool</i>			

Withdrawal Process: Billing Procedures

If a CPP child withdraws from their CPP preschool, OEC will continue to pay the tuition for that seat for 30 days after the child's last day of attendance, or until another child enrolls in the seat (whichever comes first). When a CPP child withdraws from their preschool, the provider should contact the OEC Enrollment Manager, who will remove the family from the CPP system. If a family moves out of Cambridge during the school year and wants to remain enrolled in their CPP preschool, the provider should contact OEC's Enrollment Manager and Operations Manager to notify them of the change in the family's residency status. In these situations, the family will no longer receive CPP funding, as non-Cambridge residents are ineligible for CPP. Once a family notifies their preschool provider of their change of address, the family will have ten business days to decide whether to withdraw from the preschool or convert to private-pay (non-CPP) status. When a child withdraws from the preschool, OEC will continue to pay the child's tuition for up to 30 days from the child's last date of attendance.³ If the thirty-day mark ends mid-month, OEC will pay the entire month the child attended, plus the prorated amount for the subsequent month. If the child remains enrolled at the preschool as a private-pay student, OEC will prorate the tuition payment based on the date at which the child's family moved from Cambridge.

Mid-Year Enrollments: Billing Procedures

In situations in which a CPP student enrolls in and begins attending a preschool mid-year / mid-month, the CPP provider will be compensated for the number of weeks that the child attended, not the full month.

Compliance with Outside Agencies

Programs must notify the OEC Operations Manager of any CPP children who also receive subsidies outside of CPP (e.g., voucher, scholarship, or grant funding) as well as adhere to the outside agencies' monitoring and reporting requirements. As part of the SMP, OEC will request documentation reported to outside agencies to confirm eligibility and additional sources of funding.

EEC Vouchers and Contracts

CPP providers are encouraged to serve children with state vouchers / childcare subsidies, and to waive any parent fees for these families. Programs that accept childcare subsidies (vouchers) will apply the voucher to extended day and/or summer programming costs for the student(s) receiving vouchers. OEC/CPP will not pay for extended day or summer programming for these students, as the voucher payments will

³ If the preschool fills the vacated seat with a private-pay child, OEC will not pay for the seat after the private-pay child has enrolled.

be applied to cover these costs. Programs will be expected to report on the number of CPP children receiving subsidies, as well as the amount of the parent fee for each family being waived. Please contact [Childcare Choices of Boston](#) for additional information on the voucher process.

Financial and Programmatic Requirements

All CPP provider organizations must demonstrate strong fiscal management and sustainability. This includes maintaining systems for internal control, non-discrimination policies, conflict of interest and whistleblower policies, annual budget templates, profit and loss statements, payroll records, and family accounting records. Organizations will be required to regularly submit documents to verify enrollment and attendance, educator salaries, and other financial information as requested by OEC.

OEC can perform programmatic and financial audits on any CPP program. These audits may involve reviewing financial and program records to evaluate compliance and implementation, verify the appropriate use of City funds, and avoid double billing to CPP families.

Research and Evaluation

OEC engages in ongoing program evaluation and research, sometimes in partnership with external researchers, to identify program impacts and inform its continuous improvement efforts. CPP providers must be willing to participate in CPP-related research and evaluation efforts. Some evaluations may require programs to share individual child or family data. Family consent is secured prior to such evaluation efforts. All data collected, analyzed, and synthesized by OEC will remain confidential and will only be reported in the aggregate.

Section 2: Application and Enrollment

Eligibility for CPP

The application for CPP will open each fall for the following school year. Children are eligible for CPP if they:

- Are a Cambridge resident: Children must reside within the City of Cambridge and submit valid proof of residency. The residence of a minor child is presumed to be the legal, primary residence of the parent(s) or guardian(s) who have physical custody of the child. A child's primary residence is the place where the child dwells permanently, not temporarily, and is the place that is the center of their domestic, social, and civic life. Temporary residence in the City of Cambridge, solely for the purpose of attending a CPP, shall not be considered residency.

- Are 4 years old by August 31, 2025.⁴

There is limited CPP seat availability for 3-year-olds. Eligible children must be 3 years old by August 31, 2025 for the enrolling school year. Families of three-year-olds with priority status may select preschool programs across the mixed-delivery system and are guaranteed a placement. General families for three-year-olds (without priority status) may have access to CPP seats within DHSP and CPS classrooms, although these families are not guaranteed placement.

CPP Application

Families apply to CPP programs through a single centralized online application platform (BridgeCare) that is accessible through the OEC website. The application information is available in five languages⁵, and allows families to research, select, and rank up to 10 CPP preschool programs. The application includes a series of questions to assess the family's eligibility and to gather demographic information, and asks families to upload required documents. In the application, families will also be asked to indicate if their child is currently enrolled at any of their ranked choices (this is referred to as "continuity of care") and if the child has a sibling at any one of their ranked choices. This process allows families to select programs based on their individual needs, such as length of the day, school year or full year, proximity to home or work, in addition to the current school of attendance, if a sibling is currently enrolled, etc.

Families seeking additional support with the application process can refer to the OEC website, where they will find an explanation of the process, a search tool where they can find detailed information about each CPP provider, a map of CPP preschool locations, and an FAQ section that answers commonly asked questions. Families may also contact OEC at cpp@cpsd.us or (617) 599-9823 and may receive in-person application support at the OEC office and, during the application window, at select locations across the city.

CPP Seat Allocations

OEC will identify the total number of seats that will be included in the CPP system each year by considering the previous year's CPP enrollment and year-over-year enrollment trends. In order to maintain a balance between ensuring enough seats to provide families with robust choices and minimizing the number of CPP seats that remain vacant, OEC will identify the total number of preschool seats needed across the CPP

⁴ Before a child is matched with a CPP program, their parent or legal guardian must provide proof of age to OEC as part of the application process. A birth certificate, passport, or other government-issued document must be submitted in order to verify the date of birth.

⁵ Spanish, Amharic, Arabic, Bangla, and Haitian Creole.

system, and will then work to ensure the CPP seats are distributed across the CPP sectors (community-based programs, DHSP programs, and CPS programs).⁶

Each fall, the CPP Enrollment Manager will schedule a mandatory meeting with each CPP provider to confirm seat allocations for their program. Each CPP provider must commit to allocating between 35%-50% of seats in each CPP-designated classroom as CPP seats, and to reserving a portion of seats for children with priority status. When identifying the specific number of seats allocated to a provider, OEC will take into account previous enrollment trends/demand for that program and will work with the program administrator to identify currently enrolled children who will have “continuity of care” status for the match. OEC reserves the right to make the final seat allocation determinations for each program prior to the matching process. Once the provider has committed seats to the CPP lottery, they must not fill those seats with private pay families. After the match has been completed, the provider can decide whether to reclaim any unfilled seats to fill with private pay families.

CPP Application Timeline

The application for CPP will open each fall for the following school year. Children who have completed applications by the application deadline are entered into the matching process and offered a preschool seat at one of their selected programs for the following school year. Families that miss the fall application deadline are able to apply for a smaller “mini-match” that will occur in the spring, although there will be a more limited selection of seats available in this match. After the spring match, applications for children deemed eligible for CPP will be accepted on a rolling basis, and children will be matched with programs based on the limited selection of seats available at that time.

2025-2026 Fall Application Timeline

- October 1st – November 14th, 2025: CPP application is open for families to apply
- November 15th – December 2025: Eligibility verification and matching process
- January 2026: OEC notifies CPP providers of match results
- Late January or early February 2026: Families accept or decline placements

Spring 2026 “Mini-Match” Timeline

- Early Spring 2026: CPP application reopens
- Mid Spring 2026: Eligibility verification and matching process
- Late April 2026: OEC notifies CPP providers of match results
- May 2026: Families accept or decline placement

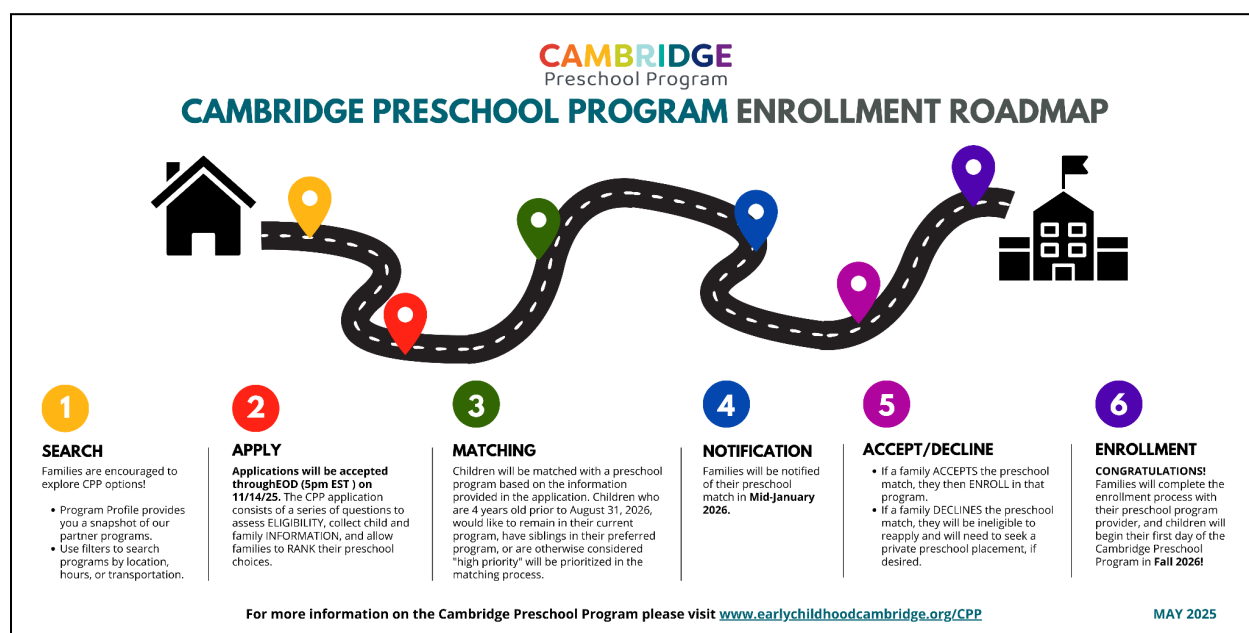
CPP Match Process:

⁶ Note that Affiliate programs manage their own enrollment process for CPP and refer eligible children and families to OEC to complete a CPP application.

Once the CPP application period has closed, OEC verifies applicant eligibility by reviewing residency documentation for all applicants, and income documentation for priority families. Once the verification process is complete, a computer algorithm matches applicants to preschool seats based on the families' ranked choices. The algorithm matches children based on priority status, the child's age, "continuity of care" status, sibling status, and the families' program selections. For families applying to one of CPS' language immersion programs, the child's language proficiency will also be considered.⁷ Prior to finalizing the matches and notifying families, the CPP Enrollment Manager meets with providers to review the matches and to identify potential anomalies (for example, children with "continuity of care" status not being placed at their current programs, siblings placed in different programs, etc.). Matches will then be finalized, and families will receive notification of their assigned match.

CPP Application: Marketing and Communications

CPP providers are responsible for marketing and promoting their programs. They will be asked to provide OEC with information and promotional photos to be included on the CPP search tool accessible through the OEC website. Additionally, OEC will work closely with local partners, community organizations, and stakeholders to support CPP programs through targeted outreach, events, and digital communications—ensuring families and caregivers can easily access program details, resources, and enrollment opportunities.



⁷ https://www.cpsd.us/departments/src/waitlist_transfers/immersion_program

	OEC Responsibilities:	CPP Preschool Provider Responsibilities:
CPP Application Platform (BridgeCare)	OEC Will: • Work closely with BridgeCare to ensure the platform is user-friendly and serves the needs of families, providers, and the broader CPP system. • Gather feedback from families and providers as part of continuous improvement efforts. • Maintain up-to-date provider information on the platform.	CPP Providers Will: • Review their BridgeCare profile and send the CPP Enrollment Manager any updated information they wish to include on the platform. • Sign an attestation indicating that any children whose faces are captured in photos have signed media release forms from parents.
CPP Seat Allocation	OEC Will: • Determine the overall number of seats that will be required across the CPP system. • Determine the number of seats that will be assigned to each provider.⁸ • Schedule individual meetings with each CPP provider to review seat allocations.	CPP Providers Will: • Commit to allocating between 35%-50% of the seats in each CPP-designated classroom as CPP seats, and to reserving seats for children with priority status. • Meet with OEC prior to the match to review seat allocations.
CPP Application and Match Process	OEC Will: • Maintain accurate and accessible information on its website. • Ensure that key family-facing documents are translated into five primary languages. • Be available to assist families with the application via email, phone, and in-person. • Schedule meetings with each provider after the match to review match results.	CPP Providers Will: • Ensure families can make informed decisions by offering access to the program through open houses, guided tours, comprehensive written materials, and direct engagement with program staff to answer questions. • Meet with OEC to review match results.

⁸ Note that OEC will take into advisement the providers' recommendations and requests for seat allocations; however, OEC retains the right to make final seat allocation decisions.

Enrollment Process	OEC Will: • Be available to assist families with the enrollment process via email, phone, and in-person.	CPP Providers Will: • Be available to answer families' questions and provide opportunities for families to visit the program. • Reach out to all newly enrolling families within one month of enrollment to warmly welcome them to the program and provide information about next steps. • Review matched families' applications to identify children with priority status, with developmental delays/disabilities, and those whose families will benefit from translated communications.
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Ongoing Enrollment Policy⁹

Although the vast majority of CPP children are matched with, and subsequently enroll in, CPP preschool programs through the annual CPP lottery process that occurs each fall or the “mini-match” that occurs each spring, some eligible families may apply for a CPP seat after the matches have been completed and/or once the school year has begun. The CPP Ongoing Enrollment Policy is designed to ensure that these CPP-eligible families have access to CPP preschool seats outside of the annual match windows. Per this policy, CPP providers will be asked to identify any unfilled preschool seats that they would like to make available to newly enrolling CPP families. This will occur once in November and again in February for the school year in progress, and once in June for the upcoming school year. OEC will maintain a list of the available seats across the CPP system, and when families apply to CPP mid-year and/or after the match has been completed, OEC will work with those families to select from among the available seats. In order to support families in making informed preschool decisions, CPP providers are strongly encouraged to continue offering tours, open houses, and providing information to families that are interested in enrolling mid-year. When children enroll in and begin attending a CPP preschool mid-month, the provider will be compensated for the number of weeks the child attended, rather than the full month.

CPP Transfer Policy¹⁰

Per the CPP Transfer Policy, OEC will approve CPP program transfers only when it has been determined that the transfer is necessary in order for the child and family to thrive.

⁹ Please refer to the [CPP Ongoing Enrollment Policy](#) for a complete explanation of the policy.

¹⁰ Please refer to the [CPP Transfer Policy](#) for a complete explanation of the policy.

When a family has requested a program transfer because of a hardship situation, OEC will:

1. Ensure that the family and program have been in communication about the hardship and that they have been working collaboratively to attempt to resolve the situation. OEC will determine whether it can provide any support or assistance that would enable the child to remain successfully enrolled in their current preschool program.
2. If it is determined that additional supports or interventions are unlikely to result in a successful resolution, OEC will convene a Transfer Review Panel to review the family's request.
3. If the transfer request is approved, OEC will work with the family to identify other CPP preschool options and to facilitate enrollment. OEC will also work with the CPP provider whose program the child is withdrawing from to identify a plan for the newly vacated CPP seat. The provider may choose to keep the seat within the CPP inventory or to attempt to fill the seat with a private-pay family. OEC will continue to pay for the child's seat in the preschool for 30 days after the child's last day of attendance.

Attendance Policy

Per the CPP Attendance Policy, all CPP students are expected to attend their preschool program consistently. CPP children who experience chronic or extended preschool absences will be at risk of losing their CPP seat, per the Attendance Policy.¹¹ In order to promote consistent attendance and prevent situations in which a CPP child loses their CPP seat, all CPP providers are required to:

- Have a documented attendance policy.¹²
- Promote consistent attendance by implementing effective and evidence-based family engagement practices, including:
 - Tier One Practices: Effective family engagement practices that ensure that all children and families feel a sense of welcome and belonging in their preschool, and ensure that all families understand the importance of consistent preschool attendance.
 - Tier Two Practices: Personalized outreach to families whose child is chronically absent or experiencing an extended absence to encourage more consistent attendance and to partner with the family to identify attendance barriers and access possible supports.
 - Tier Three Practices: Targeted intervention to develop a collaborative attendance support plan.

¹¹ CPP programs are reimbursed based on enrollment, not attendance.

¹² CPP providers should notify OEC if their program's attendance policy is in conflict with CPP's Attendance Policy.

- Engage in regular communication with OEC when a CPP child's attendance becomes a concern. Specifically, CPP providers should contact the CPP Program Manager via phone or email when a CPP child 1) has been absent for more than 10 consecutive program days; 2) anticipates being absent for more than 10 consecutive program days; or 3) has missed more than 20% of program days in a month. (At the beginning of the school year, providers should contact OEC when a newly enrolling CPP student has not attended school for more than 5 days ["no show"]).
- Maintain up-to-date attendance records for all CPP students, in accordance with local, state, and/or federal requirements. Attendance records must be made available to OEC upon request.

Per the CPP Attendance Policy, OEC may convene an Attendance Review Panel in situations in which a child has experienced (or anticipates) chronic or extended school absences, and the Attendance Review Panel may determine that the child will be withdrawn from CPP.¹³ In these situations:

- The CPP Program Manager will notify the family of the decision.
- The CPP Program Manager will work with the preschool program to determine the child's last day of enrollment. In some situations, it may be determined that the child can continue to attend school for a brief period of time in order to allow the family, with support of OEC and the preschool program, to plan for an appropriate transition.
- OEC will continue to pay for the newly vacant seat for 30 days after the child's withdrawal.¹⁴
- The CPP Enrollment Manager will contact the CPP preschool director to determine whether the preschool wishes to allow the newly vacant seat to remain open for ongoing CPP enrollment.

Withdrawal Process:

If a CPP family chooses to withdraw from CPP and their CPP preschool program (without requesting a CPP transfer), the following steps will be taken:

1. The CPP provider must notify the CPP Enrollment Manager within five business days by completing and submitting the [CPP Withdrawal Form](#).

¹³ Families that have been withdrawn from CPP due to attendance are eligible to reapply for available CPP seats if/when they determine that consistent preschool attendance is feasible for the family.

¹⁴ If the vacated seat is filled before 30 days, OEC will pay for the seat until the point at which the seat was filled.

2. The CPP Enrollment Team will contact the CPP provider to determine whether the provider would like the newly vacated seat to remain part of the CPP seat inventory or if they would like to fill the seat with a private-pay family.¹⁵
3. The CPP Program Manager may contact the family to ascertain the reasons for the withdrawal through a CPP exit conversation.
4. OEC will continue to pay for the child's seat in the preschool for 30 days after the child's last day of attendance and will pro-rate the payment accordingly.¹⁶

Section 3: CPP Educator and Staff Credential Requirements

Educator Credentials

Each CPP classroom must be staffed by a minimum of two educators. **No later than September 2028, CPP providers must ensure that at least one of the educators in each CPP-designated classroom meets the minimum qualifications for a CPP “Lead” teacher and the other meets the minimum qualifications for a CPP “Assistant” teacher (see credential table below).**¹⁷ This is the minimum requirement, and as such, a program can choose to have more than two educators in a classroom and/or have two educators serving as co-teachers, as long as the minimum qualifications are met. CPP providers are required to submit documentation for all CPP-designated educators and administrators for the upcoming school year to the OEC Credentialing Specialist during annual meetings. CPP providers that have CPP educators who do not meet the CPP credential requirements must 1) provide updated credential information to the OEC Credentialing Specialist at least once annually, and 2) Meet with the OEC Credentialing Specialist to review the provider's plan for ensuring that all CPP educators will meet the credential requirements by September 2028.

Note: CPP providers that have veteran teachers (including FCC providers) who do not meet the CPP Lead Teacher credential requirement by September 2028 may apply for a waiver for these teachers. Waivers may be granted if the teacher 1) has been teaching at the preschool for ten years or more, and 2) has demonstrated high-quality practices, as measured by the CLASS tool.

¹⁵ If a family moves out of Cambridge during the school year but wishes to remain enrolled in their CPP preschool, the provider should contact the CPP Enrollment Team promptly to discuss transferring the family to private-pay status.

¹⁶ If the vacated seat is filled before 30 days, OEC will pay for the seat until the point at which the seat was filled.

¹⁷ CPP educator classifications may differ from the Department of Early Education and Care and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education educator classifications.

Administrator Credentials

Each CPP preschool program must have at least one individual designated as the Program Administrator.¹⁸ This individual will serve as the primary contact for OEC for their respective program, and they will be responsible for:

- Ensuring overall compliance with CPP;
- Submitting documentation to OEC upon request;
- Implementing required CPP program activities.

CPP Administrators must meet the CPP Administrator Credential Requirements no later than September 2028 (see credential table below).

Credential Requirements Summary Table:

CPP Staffing Position	Required Credentials
Assistant Teachers	• Preschool CDA, OR • Community College Certificate in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, OR • Montessori Certificate, OR • High school diploma plus 12 college credits in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or Early Childhood Special Education
Lead Teachers	• A Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or Early Childhood Special Education, OR • A Bachelor's degree (in any subject) with a minimum of 18 college credits in ECE, Child Development, or Early Childhood Special Education,¹⁹ OR • A Bachelor's degree (in any subject) with a Montessori Certificate
Program Administrators	• A Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or Early Childhood Special Education plus 9 credits in Business or Program Administration, OR • A Bachelor's degree (in any subject) plus 9 credits in Business or Program Administration plus 9 credits in either Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Elementary Education, or Early Childhood Special Education, OR • A Bachelor's degree (in any subject) plus a Certificate in Early Education Leadership (CEEL) at Harvard University

¹⁸ CPP Program Administrator classifications may differ from the Department of Early Education and Care and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education administrator classifications.

¹⁹ Note that the college credits, including a MA degree, should include coursework and, ideally, practicum experience in classroom practices and pedagogy.

CPP Staffing Position	Required Credentials
Family Child Care Providers ²⁰	• A Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or Early Childhood Special Education plus 9 credits in Business or Program Administration, OR • Bachelor's degree (in any subject) plus 9 credits in Business or Program Administration plus 9 credits in either Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Elementary Education, or Early Childhood Special Education, OR • A Bachelor's degree (in any subject) plus a Certificate in Early Education Leadership (CEEL) at Harvard University

Education and Career Pathways

OEC provides the following pathways to assist CPP educators and administrators in fulfilling CPP qualification requirements:²¹

- CDA (for Assistant Teachers)
 - Online courses through Teachstone covering early childhood development topics and best practices
 - Ongoing support from an Early Education Coach and Program Advisor
 - Preparation and portfolio support to earn the CDA credential
- Fisher College Courses: Scholarships are announced four times annually. Applicants may select one course to apply for from the list below. Not every course is offered during every rollout.
 - PS103 Child Development
 - ED121 Preschool Curricula
 - ED120 Infant/Toddler Curricula
 - ED204 Strategies for Children's Behavior
 - ED223 Program Administration for Early Childhood
 - ED224 Supervision and Personnel Management
 - ED116 Health, Safety and Nutrition for Young Children
- Certificate in Early Education Leadership (CEEL) at Harvard University
 - CEEL provides early childhood leaders with the core knowledge, management skills, and leadership tools necessary to build and advance high-quality early education in any learning environment.

²⁰ FCC providers who do not meet these requirements by September 2028 may apply for a waiver from OEC. Providers may contact the OEC Workforce Development manager for information.

²¹ In order to have coursework paid for, educators/staff must apply through OEC. Coursework completed elsewhere will not be paid for or reimbursed.

Professional Development

Additionally, OEC offers a wide variety of workshops and training opportunities to early educators and staff working in Cambridge to support their continuous learning and professional development. All CPP educators and staff have full access to these opportunities as they become available. This includes communities of practice, professional learning communities, Week of the Young Child events, and topic-specific workshops such as CLASS, the Pyramid Model, and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Series, and Trauma-Informed Practices. There may be specific training topics that are critical to the success and overall quality of CPP programming and, therefore, will be required for all CPP provider organizations. OEC will notify providers when attendance is required.

Salaries

OEC is committed to ensuring that all CPP educators are highly qualified; that their salaries reflect the importance of their work; and that compensation policies are equitable across the mixed-delivery system. While OEC, in partnership with the CPP Program Advisory Board and other stakeholders, continues to examine and develop the CPP salary and compensation policies, the goal is to ensure that all CPP educators are paid salaries that are commensurate with those of CPS educators by the fall of 2028. As such, the current CPS Collective Bargaining Agreement will inform the minimum annual salary for Assistant Teachers and Lead Teachers working in all CPP settings, as outlined in the chart below.²² For the 2025-2026 school year, CPP programs are strongly encouraged to adhere to the salary guidance below in order to ensure that they are able to attract highly qualified staff and to ensure that their staff are paid appropriately; however, CPP programs will not be required to meet these salary minimums for the 2025-2026 school year.

CPP Minimum Salaries:

	Annualized Salary
Lead Teacher <i>(Based on CPS Collective Bargaining Agreement)</i>	\$67,772 ²³
Assistant Teacher <i>(Based on CPS Collective Bargaining Agreement)</i>	\$35,391

There is no minimum salary required for individuals designated as an administrator in each CPP program; however, a designated administrator in a community-based

²² All CPP Assistant Teachers educators must, at a minimum, be paid the Cambridge Living Wage.

²³ Or \$52.05 per hour for part-time educators.

program will receive a \$10,000 salary supplement (for those administrators working 12 months per year) or \$7,500 (for those administrators working less than 12 months per year). The salary supplement will be paid in two installments over the course of the contract year. The Administrator of Record is the individual within a CPP program who is responsible for implementing the components of high-quality preschool programming. The allocation of the stipend is at the discretion of the administrator of the CPP program.

Each CPP preschool program must provide the following benefits to its staff: paid time off, paid holidays, health/vision/dental insurance, life insurance, and retirement. These benefits may include a cost to the employee.

As part of the SMP process, CPP providers must document and verify their staff credentials, progress toward credential attainment, educator salaries, and staff benefits annually.

Hiring, Performance Management, and Termination

Individuals designated as CPP staff members are employees of their respective organizations. Those working in community-based early childhood organizations are not employees of the City of Cambridge or CPS. CPP provider organizations are responsible for the hiring, performance management, ongoing supervision, and termination of their respective employees. CPP providers must notify OEC within 72 hours of any staffing changes, such as terminations, affecting their designated Administrator, Lead Teachers, or Assistant Teachers.

Section 4: Program Quality

OEC is committed to ensuring that all CPP preschools provide high-quality preschool programming. To that end, OEC will take several steps to monitor and support quality programming.

Licensing

All CPP preschools must be licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) or be license-exempt. A copy of each program's license and most recent licensing report must be submitted annually as part of the SMP. Any reports or infractions submitted to licensing, public health, or an accrediting body must also be reported to the CPP Program Manager within 72 hours.

Classroom Staffing, Group Size, and Ratios

OEC requires all CPP classrooms to comply with their state licensing or governing bodies as it relates to staffing at all times. There may be occasions when a substitute who does not meet CPP credentialing requirements is necessary. If a CPP-designated

educator or staff member is absent for more than two weeks and/or a substitute who does not meet credential requirements will be working in a CPP classroom for two weeks or more, the provider must notify the CPP Program Manager.

In order to maintain high-quality early learning environments, CPP-designated classrooms should not exceed a group size of 20 children unless an exemption is obtained from EEC and permission is granted by OEC. There must be at least one educator present for every 10 children.²⁴ It is highly recommended that classrooms maintain a smaller group size if/when possible. Groups may be single-age groups or may consist of a mix of preschool-aged children.

Quality Rating and Accreditation

As a measure of commitment to continuous quality improvement, every CPP preschool program must engage in one of the following quality improvement initiatives:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children Program Accreditation (NAEYC)
- National Association for Family Child Care Accreditation (NAFCC)
- American Montessori Society School Accreditation (AMS)
- American Montessori International Recognition (AMI)
- Submission of an OEC Continuous Quality Improvement Plan

Any change or revocation in a program's accreditation or quality rating status must be immediately reported to OEC. Providers that do not currently have continuous improvement plans through one of the mechanisms listed above should contact OEC's Director of Education.

Coaching and Mentoring

OEC provides and promotes education coaching and director mentoring to support providers' continuous quality improvement efforts. CPP requires each CPP Lead Teacher to have access to regular coaching with an instructional/pedagogical leader with specialized knowledge in early childhood education. Programs may use an in-house coach, a contracted coach, or an OEC coach.

Director mentoring is another key component of continuous quality improvement. As such, CPP requires every program to have regular engagement with a Director Mentor or the OEC Program Quality Manager. OEC will contact programs in the fall to set the frequency and assignment of Director Mentors.

²⁴ However, except for brief periods of time, there should be two educators present in each CPP classroom.

Curriculum

CPP providers must adopt and implement a research-based curriculum that is rooted in play. It must align with the *Early Childhood Program Standards for 3 and 4-year-olds* and *The Preschool and Kindergarten Standards in Social-Emotional Learning and Approaches to Play and Learning*, co-created by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Approved curricula include:

- HighScope
- Focus on K1
- Creative Curriculum
- The Montessori method²⁵

CPP preschool providers that use a curriculum that is not listed above or that use an internally designed curriculum must submit a *Curriculum Crosswalk* using the template provided by OEC. Documentation of the curriculum will be maintained on file at OEC. All curricula will be verified during the SMP protocol.

Child Assessment

Providers must adopt and implement a formative assessment that is aligned with their curricula. Formative assessment is the ongoing process that early childhood educators use to observe, document, and understand children's learning and development. Programs are required to inform OEC of their assessment system annually during the SMP process and must demonstrate how program educators use assessment data to inform instruction and programming.

Developmental Screening and Checkpoint Assessments

All CPP providers are required to administer the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) for each CPP child within 45 days of the start of the child's CPP preschool attendance. This universal screening is designed to ensure the early identification of children who may be at risk for developmental delays or disabilities so that such children may have access to specialized early intervention services. ASQ data for each CPP child must be entered into the United Way DRIVE online database within the first 45 days of the start of the child's preschool attendance.

In partnership with United Way, OEC has developed a set of asynchronous training modules that provide educators with information about how to administer the tool and how to add the data to the online platform. Modules can be found on [the OEC Professional Development website](#). OEC, in collaboration with the United Way DRIVE Initiative, will use the ASQ data to inform training and technical support efforts across the city. For more information on the ASQ tool, please refer to the [Ages and Stages Questionnaire FAQ | Providers Facing](#) document.

²⁵ As demonstrated through membership or accreditation by [NAMC](#), AMI, or AMS

Preparing for Transitions

A key component of high-quality early childhood programming is the thoughtful, intentional, and collaborative planning for major transitions. CPP providers are expected to warmly welcome new children and families into their preschool program, and to support children's smooth transition to kindergarten by working closely with the family and the receiving kindergarten program to ensure that they have the information they need for a successful transition. Each CPP preschool program must:

- Implement transition activities for children and families to help prepare them for the transition to preschool and/or the transition to kindergarten.²⁶
- Distribute OEC/CPS transition materials to families.
- Complete OEC transition documents for receiving kindergarten teachers.

CPP Program Quality Monitoring

As a key component of its CPP quality monitoring and continuous improvement efforts, OEC implements a number of quality assessment measures each year.

- CLASS: Each CPP provider is required to participate in at least one assessment per year²⁷ using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool. The CLASS tool is a nationally recognized tool that measures the quality of the teacher-child interactions that are most closely associated with child outcomes. OEC partners with external vendors who are certified CLASS assessors to conduct assessments. CPP providers will receive a detailed report explaining their CLASS results after the assessments are conducted. OEC will use CLASS data to inform coaching plans, professional development offerings, and CPP quality monitoring. CLASS observations are not intended to serve as educator evaluations.
- ACSES: In school year 2025- 2026, OEC is piloting the ACSES (Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale) tool as a component of its efforts to promote equity and to ensure that all young children experience high-quality learning experiences and interactions. ACSES is an observational measure developed to assess socio-cultural interactions with a particular focus on racially marginalized learners. OEC will be partnering with the ACSES developers to provide training and information related to the tool to CPP providers during the 2025-2026 school year. During this pilot year, ACSES data will be used to inform coaching and professional development activities.
- SMP: All CPP providers will be required to meet annually (each spring) with OEC staff as part of the SMP process. Prior to these meetings, CPP providers will be required to submit documentation of various aspects of program quality, including

²⁶ Refer to [this toolkit](#) for transition resources.

²⁷ Some programs will participate in a second CLASS assessment, one in the fall and one in the spring.

information related to staffing, curriculum, salaries, program goals, and continuous improvement plans. During these meetings, the CPP Program Manager and provider administrator will also plan for the upcoming school year.

Mandated Reporting

As an organization that supports and funds programs serving young children, all OEC staff and consultants are mandated reporters. This means they are legally required to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect following state law. Should such a situation arise, OEC leadership will contact the CPP Program Administrator to discuss the suspicion and notify them if OEC must file a 51A report. Additionally, all CPP providers must notify the CPP Program Manager within 72 hours of any reports or infractions submitted to licensing, public health, or an accrediting body. This includes instances where a provider files a 51A or when a 51A is filed against a staff member or the program.

Suspension and Expulsion²⁸

CPP promotes research-based practices that minimize and/or eliminate the suspension and expulsion of children from preschool and prohibits suspension and expulsion of CPP students²⁹. Given the well-documented racial disparities in preschool suspension and expulsion practices, OEC is working to develop a robust system of behavioral health supports and will be closely analyzing program data, disaggregated by race, priority status, and language, to identify areas where additional support and resources are needed.

All CPP providers are expected to implement child-centered, culturally responsive and affirming practices that decrease the incidence of challenging behaviors and punitive disciplinary measures, including:

- Having a policy for managing challenging behaviors, including the prevention of suspension and expulsion, in their program manual and family manual, and submitting that policy to OEC through the SMP. This policy should emphasize positive guidance strategies, culturally responsive classroom practices, and effective family engagement strategies.
- Implement basic Tier One practices to promote positive behaviors and prevent challenging behaviors (see Pyramid Model resources³⁰). As part of this comprehensive approach, all CPP providers must:
 - Engage staff in training, workshops, and collaborative discussions that focus on positive guidance strategies, with particular consideration to

²⁸ Placing children on a partial day schedule as a result of their behavior is considered a suspension.

²⁹ Note that putting a child on a reduced daily schedule; requiring an early dismissal; and requiring a child to miss school for a period of time, all as a result of the child's behavior, may be considered suspension.

³⁰ <https://challengingbehavior.org/pyramid-model/overview/basics/>

diversity variables, including culturally responsive practices, neurodiversity, family values and practices, and expectations about behavior and expression of emotion. Pyramid Model trainings are recommended and are offered each year by OEC.

- Establish awareness of implicit bias in their perceptions of young children and the inequity that results from biased decision-making.
- Engage in discourse on the impact of race, neurodivergence, privilege, and power in teaching and learning, and use reflective practice to discover, challenge, and reframe one's assumptions, interpretations, and expectations.
- Implement evidence-based Tier Two and Tier Three practices when a child demonstrates significantly challenging behaviors in spite of effective Tier One practices. In these situations, programs should take the following steps:
 1. Engage closely with the child's family, as early as possible, by discussing the behaviors with them and working collaboratively to identify causes or antecedents to the behaviors and to develop agreed-upon strategies for support.
 2. Contact OEC's Behavioral Health Specialist for additional support. This Specialist's role is to advance the quality of services for children with behavioral, academic, and mental health needs and to connect early childhood agencies/teams with resources and support. The Behavioral Health Specialist will meet with the educators, conduct classroom observations, review behavioral support plans, and, in partnership with the provider, determine next steps. Next steps may include additional training and support for the educators to ensure that they are effectively implementing basic Tier One practices; engaging OEC's coaching staff; engaging the Early Years Project (EYP); and engaging OEC's Family & Community Engagement Team.³¹ If it is determined that EYP should be consulted, the OEC Behavioral Health Specialist will coordinate the initial consultation and will support the development of an intervention plan.
 3. Participate in the development of a written intervention plan³², implement the agreed-upon intervention plan as intended, and collaborate with EYP and the OEC Behavioral Health Specialist to ensure appropriate implementation of the plan, to review behavioral data, and to make adjustments as necessary.
 4. Contact OEC's Director of Family and Community Engagement, with the parents' consent, if additional family resources or support may be helpful.

³¹ Review the "Helpful Resources" section for more detailed information about EYP.

³² OEC can provide intervention plan templates and supports upon request.

Section 5: Family Engagement

Family engagement and strong partnerships with families are foundational to high-quality early childhood programs. CPP providers must designate a person from their team to lead family engagement efforts at their site and provide a family engagement/family partnership policy to families and OEC. All CPP programs are expected to implement high-quality family engagement practices, in alignment with the recommendations of NAEYC. High-quality family engagement practices include:

- Welcoming children and families prior to the first day of school. This may include conducting home visits, welcoming children and families to visit the classroom, inviting children and families to “playdates,” etc.
- Inviting families to participate in decision-making and goal-setting for their child, and to actively participate in decisions concerning their child’s education.
- Engaging families in two-way communication and information sharing. Conversations should focus on a child’s educational experience as well as the larger program, and should reflect each family’s language preference.
- Learning activities for the home and in the community. In order to create a bridge between home and school, programs should seek information about children’s lives, families, and communities and integrate this information into their curriculum and teaching practices.
- Inviting families to participate in program-level decisions and wider advocacy efforts. Programs should also invite families to advocate for early childhood education in the wider community.
- Ensuring that teachers, administrators, and other staff receive the support they need to fully engage families.

Periodically, CPP providers will be asked to engage with families and/or provide information on behalf of CPP.

Helpful Resources

OEC Family & Community Engagement Team

The OEC Director of Family & Community Engagement is available to collaborate with CPP preschool providers on their family engagement strategies and to connect families with community-based resources and support. This Director may connect and coordinate support services for families in the areas of behavioral health, childcare (including for infants and toddlers), health insurance and health care, dental care, financial assistance, housing resources, and more. Upon request, OEC will assist programs in developing the tools to help support families in locating medical care and resources. The Director of Family & Community Engagement will not be able to reach

out to a family, per a CPP provider's request, unless the CPP provider has received consent from the family to discuss the family's situation with this Director.

The CPP Toolkit

[The toolkit](#) gives an overview of the Cambridge Preschool Program, its structure, and key documents. It also includes contact information, guiding documents, and helpful resources for educators and families.

Cambridge Public Schools - Special Start Program

Cambridge Public Schools Special Start Program provides developmental evaluations and special education services and programs for children with a wide range of disabilities. The program is designed to partner with caregivers to provide appropriate screening, evaluation, and special education services to young children. A young child who is deemed eligible for special education receives services in the least restrictive environment (LRE), which can include a childcare setting or a public school, as determined by the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team. Services are provided at no cost to families through the Cambridge Public Schools.

OEC works closely with Special Start staff and encourages CPP programs to identify children who may have a developmental delay or difference by 1) reviewing the results of the ASQ screening; 2) reviewing the CPP applications for their newly enrolling students; 3) engage with families, prior to the start of the school year, to discuss with them any developmental concerns they might have about their child's development. If a child has an IEP, providers should ask the family if they would be willing to share the IEP with preschool staff so that the preschool program can be aware of the IEP goals and can align their classroom practices to the IEP.³³ More information can be found [here](#), including information about how to make a referral.

The Early Years Project - Riverside Community Care

OEC contracts with The Early Years Project (EYP) to support children, their families, and teachers in childcare environments from infancy until they enter school. EYP primarily focuses on supporting the development of self-regulation skills, addressing social-emotional and behavioral challenges, answering developmental inquiries, and offering assistance during challenging situations. You can read more about EYP [here](#).

Center For Families

The Center for Families (CFF) offers programming for Cambridge families and their children ages birth to 8 years old. CFF offers parent/child activities, playgroups, parenting workshops, infant support, family fun events, programs for fathers,

³³ Special Start may not release any information about a child's IEP without parental consent.

connections to resources, and more. OEC works collaboratively with CFF to provide case management for families in CPP. This service is available to any family who needs support or has needs beyond what the CPP provider can help with. Click [here](#) to learn more about CFF.

Community Engagement Team

The Community Engagement Team (CET) supports Cambridge newcomers and their families by helping families learn about and connect with community events, services, and opportunities that can improve their lives. If a family has been living in Cambridge for 3 years or less AND if their primary language is Spanish, Arabic, Amharic, Haitian Creole, or Bangla, they might benefit from being connected to CET. To learn more about CET, click [here](#).

Translation and Interpretation Services

The City of Cambridge offers free over-the-phone interpretation services. This service is available to CPP programs.³⁴ To use these interpreting services, please follow the instructions provided in this document: [Accessing Over-the-Phone Interpreting \(OPI\) Information Sheet](#). CPP providers can use the OEC code - **1032**. Upon request, OEC can also assist with translating documents for CPP families. Please contact cpp@cpsd.us for assistance. This process takes about two weeks, so please plan accordingly.

Glossary

Below are some of the definitions, terms, and common phrases used within this report and the broader field of early childhood education.

Definitions

Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ): A developmental and social-emotional screening tool for children between birth and age 6.

Aligned programming: Agreed-upon standards for policy and operations between multiple programs within the universal preschool system.

Child Assessment: A process to monitor a child's ongoing growth and development.

Child Development Associate (CDA): A national credentialing program for early educators working in a variety of settings with children ages birth to 5 years old and their families. The program is designed to credential early childhood education professionals using multiple sources of evidence, including an exam, observation, and a

³⁴ All CPP providers should review the CPP applications for their newly enrolling students to determine which families will benefit from or need translation services.

professional portfolio.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS): This tool defines teaching quality through the lens of interactions and provides the ability to measure and improve the interactions that matter most for children's outcomes.

Program Assessment: Standardized tools to monitor program quality and/or quality improvement over time.

Program Quality/Program Standards: Research-based guidelines for curriculum, assessment, program evaluation, student-to-teacher ratios, and program supports.

Universal Preschool or Universal Pre-K (UPK): Universal preschool is a policy framework that gives all families with preschool-aged children the opportunity to voluntarily enroll their child in a publicly funded pre-kindergarten care and education program in a given state or community.

Program/Organization vs. Location vs. Classroom: A program or organization is considered to be the umbrella entity partnered with the CPP. A location is a single site where early childhood services are provided. A program or organization can be a single location or may have multiple locations. A classroom is a space within a location where the CPP is implemented. In a location, there may be multiple classrooms.

Acronyms

OEC: The Cambridge Office of Early Childhood (formerly Birth to Third Grade Partnership)

CPP: Cambridge Preschool Program

CPSD/CPS: Cambridge Public Schools

DHSP: Department of Human Service Programs

DESE: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

EEC: Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

NAEYC: National Association for the Education of Young Children

Early Childhood Program Settings

CPS: Cambridge Public Schools Department, the school district located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The district enrolls approximately 6,750 students in preschool through high school. The district has twelve elementary schools, four Upper Schools (grades six to eight), and one comprehensive high school (Cambridge Rindge and Latin School), which includes a career and technical education program (Rindge School of Technical Arts) and an alternative option (High School Extension Program).

Community-Based Organization: A center or family childcare learning environment where CPP will be implemented.

DHSP Preschools: City-sponsored early childhood programs primarily housed in school district buildings and serve preschool-aged children.

Family Child Care: A family child care program is a form of early childhood education in which a caregiver cares for children in their own home, often with the help of an assistant. A family child care program is typically licensed for between 6 and 10 children, although these numbers do vary. These small, intimate environments provide many opportunities for 1:1 interactions between the provider and each child, mixed-age groups, and the opportunity for “continuity of care” (where a child stays with the same caregiver over a long period of time).

Preschool: A school or program that provides educational services to children approximately 3-5 years of age. Preschools may run on a part-day or full-day basis and typically operate during the school year, with additional programming sometimes available during the summer.