RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

CPRL Center for Public Research and Leadership

CCAP Supplemental Funding Model: Findings & Recommendations

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1 Introduction & CCAP Supplemental Overview

WHAT IS CCAP?

The Starting RIght Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) -

A program available to subsidize the cost of child care for qualified families that are residents of Rhode Island.

WHAT WE SOUGHT TO LEARN

1. To what extent is the CCAP Supplemental funding model meeting its objectives? Why? For whom?

2. What can RI learn from pre-k programs in other states?

3. How might RIDE continue to meet the CCAP Supplemental funding model's objectives?
    a. How might RIDE improve CCAP Supplemental funding model implementation?
    b. What other policy or funding approaches should RI consider?

WHO WE LEARNED FROM

- 20+ RI Pre-K providers
- National Pre-K system administrators and funding experts
- RI State Legislators
- RIDE and DHS staff
- Centering the provider and family experience

RI leads in Pre-K quality, but lags in access and funding

One of only four states to meet all 10 National Institute for Early Education (NIEER) benchmarks for minimum Pre-K program **quality** (AL, MI, MS)

Ranks in the top 10 on per child public spending (~ $10K), but has a **$6K gap between spending and estimated cost** per child (~ $16K)

Ranks 29th with respect to **access** for four-year olds (22%)

Source: 2024 NIEER State of Preschool

Statewide demand for RI Pre-K outpaces available seats

RI Pre-K serves more than 2,800 children across 20 communities, with plans to reach 5,000 seats — by 2028

1,007 children were on the RI Pre-K waitlist following the 2025-26 lottery

762 children remained on the waitlist as of April 2026

Source: RI Pre-K CCAP Supplemental Funding Analysis, August 2026

CURRENT RI PRE-K FUNDING MODELS

Model #	Model Description	Access
Model 1	Traditional Full Classroom	RI Pre-K Lottery Full Classroom (18-20 children)
Model 2	Head Start Duration	Head Start classroom to meet RI Pre-K requirements for day and year duration
Model 3	Head Start Braided	Head Start for children under 135% FPL (no lottery); RI Pre-K lottery for 135-185% and 185%+
Model 4	CCAP Supplemental	CCAP certificate and RI Pre-K lottery
Model 5	LEA Quality	RI Pre-K lottery and children with an IEP

CCAP SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING LANDSCAPE

A Small and Declining Portion of RI Pre-K

Fiscal Year	Total Number of RI Pre-K Classes	Percentage of CCAP Supplemental Classes	Percentage of total classes
2027	152	5	3%
2026	153	9	6%
2025	152	12	8%
2024	128	11	9%
2023	128	10	8%
2022	127	5	4%

Goals of the CCAP Funding Model

The CCAP Supplemental Funding Model is intended to...

- Maximize existing state and federal funding
- Provide supplemental funding for programs who serve higher needs families
- Allow programs to apply to RI Pre-K without an empty classroom

The CCAP Supplemental Funding Model is not intended to...

- Provide continuity of care for all students regardless of family income in a non-universal system
- Allow families to bypass the lottery
- Remove residency requirements

CCAP SUPPLEMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

For Families (CCAP)

1. Minimum of one child under 13 who is a U.S. citizen or legal resident
2. Parent(s) must meet a qualifying child care need — employment, college enrollment, or a parent or child with a disability; in two-parent households, both parents must qualify.
3. Income below 261% of the federal poverty level for new applicants; families may remain as income rises to 300% FPL. Current caps: $55,202 (single parent, one child); $69,557 (family of three); $83,912 (family of four).
4. Co-pay may be required based on family income.
5. Families are responsible for maintaining CCAP eligibility. As of July 2025, determinations last 24 months (up from 12), resolving mid-year disqualification.
6. Categorical eligibility expanded modestly: college students, an educator pilot, DCYF-involved children.

CCAP SUPPLEMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

For RI Pre-K Providers (CCAP Supplemental Funding Model)

1. RI Pre-K providers apply for the CCAP Supplemental Funding Model during the grant application process.
2. To be eligible to apply, programs must have a minimum of nine (9) children of CCAP-eligible families, have a robust pipeline of CCAP families and agree to reserve seats within the RI Pre-K classroom.
3. Agree to support families in renewing CCAP eligibility during the RI Pre-K year to ensure funding and support quality.
4. Annually maintain a minimum of nine (9) children of CCAP-eligible families to matriculate to RI Pre-K classrooms to ensure financial sustainability for programs compared to full classroom funding.
5. Communicate the program specific policies, procedures and timelines with eligible families.

2 Findings

WHAT WE LEARNED

1. Stakeholders buy-in to the CCAP Supplemental funding model objectives, but are uncertain about its implementation.

2. Braiding and blending funding is typical–and often necessary—in the early childhood field, but is a root cause of the CCAP Supplemental challenges.

3. The CCAP Supplemental funding model's source of additional funding—CCAP certificates—may present challenges for providers and families.

4. Children with disabilities are most vulnerable to the limitations of braiding and blending CCAP and RI Pre-K funding.

FINDING #1

Stakeholders buy-in to the CCAP Supplemental funding models objectives, but are uncertain about its implementation.

When you add the money that you will receive from CCAP… the income looks like, okay, that will be amazing. We will have more money to do something different with the program. But the reality was not like that."

- RI Pre-K Provider

"Equity is hard to quantify; we have a good amount of full pay families, also families that just missed the DHS cutoff. Sometimes there can be a perception that we are not helping the kids that need to be helped."

- RI Pre-K Provider

FINDING #2

Braiding and blending funding is typical–and often necessary—in the early childhood field, but is a root cause of the CCAP Supplemental challenges.

"The flexibility of braiding is a "huge strength"... that creates opportunities for public Pre-K to be fully funded. At the same time, "it's a huge problem... because there's nobody who is actually accountable for how all those things are blending and braiding equitably across the system. "

- Expert in ECE Systems

"It is problematic that with the exception of federal guidelines, for the most part, there are no specific state policies that are enforced around braiding or blending." "

- DHS Staff

"It takes a savvy business person [to run a CCAP Supplemental classroom]."

- Pre-K Administrator

WHAT OTHER STATES DO

Connecticut - a child may hold both a contracted seat and a certificate, together covering the cost of care.

Illinois - braiding is allowed with few restrictions — a strength, but no one is accountable for equity.

Georgia - lottery-funded universal pre-K for 30+ years, restricted to early childhood or college use.

West Virginia - per-pupil allocations to counties with required pre-K coordinators; 4th in access (2023-24).

Maine - a formula that raises the state share for districts with more English learners and high need.

FINDING #3

The CCAP Supplemental funding model's source of additional funding — CCAP certificates — presents challenges for providers and families.

"...Once they are in, parents don't have the need to apply for CCAP... because they're going to get a seat."

- RI Pre-K Provider

"When we try to work with families [on CCAP eligibility], it's tough right now; they are just trying to survive versus seeing how they can qualify for CCAP."

- Pre-K program provider

FINDING #4

Children with disabilities are most vulnerable to the limitations of braiding and blending CCAP and RI Pre-K funding.

"...families choose us because we are full day and if they [the district] don't provide services we are struggling to support the children."

- RI Pre-K Director

"Essentially, this rug is pulled [out from] under any family whose kids have an IEP."

- RI State Legislator

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3 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION THEMES

1. Increase CCAP Supplemental Funding Model awareness and equity of access
2. Increase CCAP Participation Statewide
3. Change policies to strengthen RI Pre-K as a whole
4. Consider changes to how CCAP dollars are used

RECOMMENDATION #1

Increase CCAP Supplemental awareness and equity of access

SUGGESTED ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTNER
Develop a "Playbook" of model guidelines for providers, including the duty to keep nine CCAP-eligible students year-round	RI Department of Education
Fund outreach to families on RI Pre-K availability, and how families of three-year-olds can use CCAP certificates to access RI Pre-K	RI Department of Education & RI Department of Human Services
Consider limiting the model to providers with at least 50% CCAP-enrolled families program-wide	RI Department of Education & RI Department of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION #2

Increase CCAP Participation Statewide

SUGGESTED ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTNER
Eliminate the child support requirement for CCAP eligibility	RI Legislature
Expand CCAP eligibility, at minimum covering the 180 day school year so there is no lapse in funding	RI Legislature & RI Department of Human Services
Observe how the July 2025 move to 24-month eligibility affects 2026-27 enrollment	RI Department of Education & RI Department of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION #3

Change policies to strengthen RI Pre-K as a whole

SUGGESTED ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTNER
Regionalize Pre-K special education funding so children keep services outside of their district of residence	RI Legislature & RI Department of Education
Adding an income cap for families in the RI Pre-K lottery	RI Department of Education
Fully fund RI Pre-K via a local cost-share or dedicated revenue stream	RI Legislature

RECOMMENDATION #4

Consider changes to how CCAP dollars are used

SUGGESTED ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTNER
Directly contracting with providers so CCAP seats are set aside for eligible families and programs receive sustained funding	RI Legislature & RI Department of Human Services
Strengthen RI Pre-K quality by layering CCAP dollars on top of the fully funded classroom allocation in RI Pre-K classes with CCAP-eligible students	RI Department of Education & RI Department of Human Services

CONCLUSION

RIDE was thoughtful and innovative in developing the RI Pre-K CCAP Supplemental funding model. The model holds promise — but the aims it strives to meet, continuous high-quality learning for Rhode Island's families and children, would best be met by providing universal access so every child has a free, high-quality, full day seat in Pre-K.

LOOKING AHEAD

RIDE can and should continue to partner with DHS and the General Assembly on adjusting CCAP eligibility and access while prioritizing the highest-need students within the RI Pre-K system.