



Press Release

73 Easton Avenue • New Brunswick, NJ 08901 • Phone 848.932.4350 • Fax 732.932.4360 • www.nieer.org

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Contact: Michelle Ramjug, mramjug@nieer.org, 848-932-4350

IMPROVED ACCESS TO QUALITY PRE-K IN NEW YORK OUTPACES OTHER STATES

New York's Gains Serve as Example for Others to Follow

[NEW YORK, NY]—Many 3- and 4-year olds still lack access to high-quality preschool education despite modest gains in enrollment, quality, and funding, according to an [annual report](#) by the nonpartisan National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University. While several states, including New York, made significant progress through a concerted effort to increase enrollment and funding and improve quality, progress is slow and uneven nationally and quality standards are particularly low for some of the nation's largest states like California, Florida and Texas. Despite the relatively good news this year, the rate of progress is so slow that it will take 150 years for the nation to reach 75 percent enrollment in state pre-K even at age 4.

In New York State, enrollment was up by 13,210 children in 2014-2015, a 13 percent increase overall, with a surge in full-day services and the overall pre-K investment nearly doubling. There was no change in terms of quality standards—the state met 7 of NIEER's 10 minimum quality standards benchmarks. However, the latest expansion included supplemental funding to support quality improvement strategies as part-day seats were converted to full-day. New York has made substantial efforts to increase funding for the state's early learners, accounting for two-thirds of the overall national increase in state preschool funding. Governor Cuomo made a commitment to achieving access to universal pre-K within five years, and promised to fund every district that came forward with a plan for quality implementation. In the 2014-2015 school year, the state increased funding by \$364M to expand early childhood education, and continued to grow in 2015-2016 with another funding increase of \$30M to increase enrollment in high-needs districts

T-the most remarkable expansion in 2014 occurred in New York City, which built from an already strong base to increase access to a full day and raise quality under Mayor de Blasio's leadership. Through diligent effort on the part of the entire early education community, in the last two years, the city added more than 50,000 full-day opportunities through conversions of half day to full-day slots and new seats.

“New York City has proven that by working with a wide array of parties, from community leaders to developers and faith-based groups it is possible to identify capacity quickly and execute plans to good effect,” said NIEER director Steve Barnett. “The result is that the number of full-day seats in community settings grew tenfold, expanding families' choices with an array of options in museums, libraries and other community programs.”

The State of Preschool report for the 2014-2015 school year, which includes objective state-by-state profiles and rankings, indicates that urgent action is needed from lawmakers at all levels of government to ensure that every child – particularly those from low-income families – have access to high-quality early education. For the first year, NIEER also analyzed states’ early education workforce and Dual Language Learner policies, which reveals that New York still has much more to do if it is to adequately support dual language learners and provide teachers salary parity with elementary education.

The report finds that for the nation as a whole, total state spending on pre-K programs increased by 10 percent, or \$553 million, since the previous year, bringing state spending in 2014-2015 to over \$6.2 billion. The number of children served by state-funded pre-K served increased by 37,167 in 2014-2105, bringing the total to almost 1.4 million children – the largest number of children ever served by state-funded pre-K. With an average rate of \$4,489, states also made one of the most significant increases in spending per child in recent history.

Despite these gains, the report’s findings underscore that those states like California, Florida, and Texas with the largest populations of young children are falling behind—they were among the states that met the fewest quality standards benchmarks, and Texas and Florida also reduced enrollment and spending in 2014-2015. Nationally, enrollment has risen by just one percentage point for both 4- and 3-year olds over five years. The sluggish pace of change disproportionately impacts low-income families.

“We’re encouraged to see several states increasing in enrollment and improving quality, but access to high-quality pre-K in the United States remains low and highly unequal,” said Barnett. “Expanding access to quality pre-K programs is one of the best investments we can make, and it’s critical that we raise and standardize salaries for early education teachers and have strong Dual language Learner policies in states with large Hispanic populations. State governments should increase and stabilize funding for pre-K and raise standards for the benefit of all children.”

The State of Preschool Report reviews state-funded pre-K programs on 10 benchmarks of quality standards, including the presence of a qualified instructor, class size, teacher-to-student ratio, presence of an assistant, and length of instruction per day.

For more information on *The State of Preschool 2015* yearbook and detailed state-by-state breakdowns on quality benchmarks, enrollment, and funding, please click [here](#).

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The National Institute for Early Education Research (www.nieer.org) at the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research.