



Press Release

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2016 STATE OF PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK SHOWS LITTLE GROWTH IN HAWAII'S ENROLLMENT AND FUNDING

Hawaii continues to support only a few hundred children in public preschool

New Brunswick, NJ — Hawaii's two-year-old public preschool program met most quality standards benchmarks despite flat funding for 2015-2016, according to the 2016 State of Preschool Yearbook released today by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

The State of Preschool Yearbook is the only national report on state-funded preschool programs with detailed information on enrollment, funding, teacher qualifications, and other policies related to quality. Decades of research shows that early childhood education can prepare children for greater success in elementary school and beyond, with benefits largest for the most disadvantaged — but only if quality is high.

Hawaii's Pre-Kindergarten program enrolls just two percent of the state's 4-year-olds, adding only 10 students over the year. Nationwide, state-funded preschool program enrollment reached an all-time high, serving nearly 1.5 million children, 32 percent of 4-year-olds and five percent of 3-year-olds. State funding for preschool rose eight percent to about \$7.4 billion, a \$550 million increase. State funding per child increased to \$4,967, exceeding pre-recession levels for the first time. Five states met all 10 current quality standards benchmarks. Nine states had programs that met fewer than half; and seven states do not fund preschool at all.

"Early childhood education is a great investment," said NIEER Director W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D. "We see Hawaii meeting 8 quality standard benchmarks but more work is needed to provide wider access to a high-quality program that can help children get the best possible start in life."

In Hawaii:

- Total state funding remained at \$2.8 million, the same as 2014-2015
- Enrollment had a small increase from 365 4-year-olds to 375 in the 2015-2016 school year. Hawaii ranked 42nd in access for 4-year-olds out of 44 states
- State spending per child ranked 7th nationwide, despite a \$204 drop to \$7,467 in 2015-2016
- Hawaii met eight of NIEER's current quality standards benchmarks
- The state received a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant and served an additional 78 children in high-quality preschool in the state

Current benchmarks were designed to help states build programs, focusing on resources and policies related to the structural aspects of public pre-K— elements needed for a high-quality program but not fully defining one. This year, NIEER is introducing major revisions to the policy benchmarks for the first time since the Yearbook was launched in 2003. The new benchmarks raise the bar by focusing on policies that more directly support continuous improvement of classroom quality. State profiles in the 2016 Yearbook include both current and new benchmark scores.

Hawaii met seven of the new benchmarks, including meeting new requirements for early learning and development standards that are culturally sensitive, supported, and aligned with other state standards and child assessments. They also meet the new curriculum supports and continuous quality improvement system benchmark. However, current policies fell short of benchmarks requiring professional development and ongoing coaching for both lead and assistant teachers.

“States meeting current benchmarks should be proud of their accomplishments,” Dr. Barnett concluded. “But simply meeting the benchmarks does not guarantee children are receiving a high-quality classroom experience. Research indicates most states need to do more to ensure high quality for every child.”

The State of Preschool Yearbook was supported with funding provided by the Heising-Simons Foundation while the survey data on which it relies was funded by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The findings, interpretations, and conclusions in this report are solely those of the authors. For more information and detailed state-by-state profiles on quality access, and funding, please visit www.nieer.org.