



Press Release

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2016 STATE OF PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK SHOWS INDIANA MAKES STRIDES TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT, FUNDING

First Year of Implementation in Indiana Shows Need to Improve Program Quality

New Brunswick, NJ — Indiana increased state funding to \$9.5 million, fully implementing its On My Way Pre-K program, but enrolling just two percent of state 4-year-olds, 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.

Indiana enrolled 1,585 4-year-olds, an increase of 1,170 from its first year as a pilot program in 2014-2015. 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 5 percent 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 Indiana expanding enrollment and increasing funding but more work is needed to provide the high-quality pre-K that helps children get the best possible start in life.”

In Indiana:

- Total state funding was over \$9.5 million in 2015-2016, an increase of \$8.4 million from 2014-2015 when the program was still being piloted
- The On My Way Pre-K program served 1,585 4-year-olds, two percent of state, increasing by 1,170 children in its first full year of implementation. Indiana ranks 43rd in access for 4-year-olds, out of 44 states.
- State funding per child was \$6,020, an increase of \$3,428 from 2014-2015, ranking 17th nationwide
- Indiana met three of NIEER's 10 current quality standards benchmarks
- In 2017, the On My Way Pre-K program will absorb the state's other preschool program, the Early Education Matching Grants (EEMG) program, expanding the program to a total of 20 counties and increasing funding by \$10 million per year.

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.

Indiana meets only one of the new benchmarks, meeting the requirement for early learning and development standards that are standards that are culturally sensitive, supported, and aligned with other state standards and child assessments. Current policies fall short of benchmarks requiring supports for curriculum implementation; professional development, ongoing coaching and individualized professional development plans for lead and assistant teachers; and a continuous quality improvement system.

“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.