



## Press Release

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### **2016 STATE OF PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK SHOWS MARYLAND INVESTING STATE, FEDERAL AND LOCAL DOLLARS**

*Maryland's federal grant enhances enrollment, yet state spending per child is low*

New Brunswick, NJ —Maryland invested \$109 million in public preschool; total funding for the Maryland Prekindergarten Program totaled \$239 million including state, local, and federal resources, 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.

The Maryland Prekindergarten Program enrolled 31,740 children, almost 36 percent of state 4-year-olds and five percent of state 3-year-olds. 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 8 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 Maryland maintaining quality standards but more work is needed to provide access and resources for the high-quality pre-K that helps children get the best possible start in life.”

In Maryland:

- Total state funding was \$109 million in 2015-2016, relatively unchanged from 2014-2015
- The Maryland Prekindergarten Program served 31,740 children ages 3 and 4, an increase of 1,359 children from 2014-2015
- Maryland ranks 13<sup>th</sup> out of 44 states in access for 4-year-olds and 16<sup>th</sup> in access for 3-year-olds out of the 29 states that served 3-year-olds
- State funding per child was \$3,441 and Maryland ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> nationwide on state spending per child
- Including federal, local, and state dollars, funding was \$7,533 per child. Maryland ranked 14<sup>th</sup> on this indicator
- Maryland met eight of NIEER’s 10 current quality standards benchmarks
- Maryland received a federal Preschool Development Grant which allowed the state to serve an additional 1,459 children in high-quality preschool and enhance quality for another 1,273 children

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.

Maryland met seven new benchmarks, including new requirements for early learning and development standards that are culturally sensitive, supported, and aligned with other state standards and child assessments. The state also met the new requirements for supports for curriculum implementation and a continuous quality improvement system. However, current policies fell short of the new requirements for professional development and coaching for 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](http://www.nieer.org).*