



## Press Release

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### **2016 STATE OF PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK SHOWS NEVADA REDUCING RESOURCES AS ENROLLMENT GROWS**

*Nevada spending per child, preschool access rank among nation's lowest*

New Brunswick, NJ — Nevada decreased preschool funding as access for both 3- and 4-year-olds ranked among the lowest nationwide, 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.

Nevada's State Pre-Kindergarten Program enrolled 1,566 children, including 3.8 percent of state 4-year-olds and less than one 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 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 Nevada enrolling a few more children but more work is needed to provide adequate funding and improve access to the high-quality pre-K that helps children get the best possible start in life.”

In Nevada:

- Total state funding was \$3,338,875 in 2015-2016, a decrease of \$6,000 from 2014-2015, adjusted for inflation
- Nevada's State Pre-Kindergarten Program served 1,566 children, including 1,357 4-year-olds and 179 3-year-olds, an increase of 138 children from 2014-2015
- Nevada ranked 39<sup>th</sup> in access for 4-year-olds out of 44 states and last for access for 3-year-olds out of the 29 states that enrolled 3-year-olds
- State funding per child was \$2,132, a decrease of \$261 from 2014-2015, ranking 43<sup>rd</sup> nationwide out of 44 states. Including federal sources, funding per child was \$4,512.
- Nevada met seven of NIEER's 10 current quality standards benchmarks
- The state received a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant, enabling the state to serve additional children in high-quality preschool

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.

Nevada meets six of the new benchmarks 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 requirement for supports for curriculum implementation. However, current policies fall short of benchmarks requiring professional development, ongoing-coaching, and individualized professional development plans for both 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.”

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