



## Press Release

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### **2016 STATE OF PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK SHOWS NEW MEXICO INVESTING MORE TO REACH MORE CHILDREN**

*New Mexico quality standards meet most NIEER benchmarks*

New Brunswick, NJ — New Mexico boosted PreK funding by almost 30 percent and expanded enrollment, 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.

New Mexico enrolled 9,757 children in PreK, including one-third of state 4-year-olds and almost two percent of 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 New Mexico continuing to meet most current quality standards benchmarks and increase funding and enrollment but more work is needed to increase access to provide the high-quality pre-K that helps children get the best possible start in life.”

In New Mexico:

- Total state funding was \$51 million in 2015-2016, a 29 percent increase of \$11.3 million from 2014-2015
- New Mexico's PreK program served 9,757 children, including 9,254 4-year-olds and 503 3-year-olds. Enrollment increased by 1,360 children from 2014-2015.
- New Mexico ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in access for 4-year-olds out of 44 states and 22<sup>nd</sup> for access for 3-year-olds among the 29 states that served 3-year-olds
- State funding per child was \$5,233, an increase of \$502 from 2014-2015, ranking 20<sup>th</sup> nationwide
- New Mexico met eight of NIEER's 10 current quality standards benchmarks

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.

New Mexico met eight 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 met the new requirements for supports for curriculum implementation; professional development, ongoing-coaching, and individualized professional development plans for both lead and assistant teachers; and have 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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