



Press Release

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2016 STATE OF PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK SHOWS OHIO INCREASING FUNDING AND EXPANDING ENROLLMENT

Enrollment and spending continue to increase but remain low; quality also lags

New Brunswick, NJ — Ohio increased funding 33 percent to \$59 million, as enrollment grew by nearly 4,000 children statewide, 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.

Ohio's Early Childhood Education Program enrolled 14,765 children, including nearly 8 percent of the state's 4-year-olds and 3 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. Across the country, state funding for preschool rose 8 percent to about \$7.4 billion, a \$550 million increase. Nationally, 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 Ohio making progress on access and enrollment but more work is needed to improve quality and provide the high-quality pre-K that helps children get the best possible start in life.”

In Ohio:

- Total state funding was \$59,060,000 in 2015-2016, a 33 percent increase of \$14.6 million from 2014-2015, adjusted for inflation
- Ohio's program served 14,765 children, including 10,846 4-year-olds and 3,919 3-year-olds. Enrollment increased 33 percent by 3,675 children from 2014-2015.
- Ohio ranks 33rd in the nation for access for 4-year-olds out of 44 states. The state ranks 20th in access for 3-year-olds among 29 states that serve 3-year-olds.
- State funding per child was \$4,000 remaining relatively stable from 2014-2015 and ranking 27th in state resources per child.
- Ohio met 4 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.

Ohio met five 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. 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 benchmark requiring professional development and ongoing-coaching for both lead and assistant teachers. Ohio is one of only two states to meet more *new* than *current* benchmarks.

“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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