



Press Release

73 Easton Avenue • New Brunswick, NJ 08901 • Phone 848.932.4350 • Fax 732.932.4360 • www.nieer.org

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Contact:

Justin Greenberg

justin.greenberg@berlinrosen.com

202-800-7410

Michelle Ruess

mruess@nieer.org

848-932-4350

2016 STATE OF PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK SHOWS SOUTH CAROLINA BOOSTING FUNDING, YET RANKING LOW IN PER CHILD SPENDING

South Carolina preschool access above average, remains relatively high compared to other states

New Brunswick, NJ — South Carolina boosted preschool funding 31 percent to \$79.2 million, yet per child funding 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.

South Carolina's Child Development Education Program and EIA Child Development Program (4K) enrolled 23,536 4-year-olds, about 40 percent of 4-year-olds in the state. 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 South Carolina investing more resources into preschool but more work is needed to improve

program quality and funding in order to provide the high-quality pre-K that can help children get the best possible start in life.”

In South Carolina:

- Total state funding was \$79,248,973 in 2015-2016, a 31 percent increase of \$18.9 million from 2014-2015, adjusted for inflation
- South Carolina’s programs served 23,536 4-year-olds, about 40 percent of state 4-year-olds
- South Carolina ranked 12th in access for 4-year-olds out of 44 states and did not serve 3-year-olds
- State funding per child was \$3,367, an increase of \$1,383 from 2014-2015, ranking 35th nationwide
- South Carolina met six 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.

South Carolina met an average of 4.5 of the new benchmarks, meeting new requirements for supports for curriculum implementation. However, current policies fell short of benchmarks requiring professional development, ongoing-coaching, and individualized professional development plans for both lead and assistant teachers; early learning and development standards that are culturally sensitive, supported, and aligned with other state standards and child assessments; 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.