



## **NIEER Overview**

Since 2002, the National Institute for Early Education Research has provided independent, research-based analysis and technical assistance to inform policy supporting high-quality early education for all young children. NIEER is committed to providing nonpartisan research that enhances the early childhood education field and encourages policies and practices promoting the physical, cognitive and social-emotional development children need to thrive in school and beyond.

NIEER's *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. NIEER quality standards benchmarks have been adopted as regulations by several state early education programs. NIEER recently introduced *The State(s) of Head Start*, the first report to describe and analyze in detail Head Start enrollment, funding, quality, and duration, state-by-state. NIEER researchers also support young learners through the design and development of high-quality curriculum, assessments, professional development and other supports for practice.

NIEER was founded as a national policy research center with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts with leadership from Senior Co-Director W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D., an economist and Board of Governors Professor at Rutgers University. As NIEER evolved we have developed a diverse team that carries out the Institute's research using their combined backgrounds in education, human development, developmental psychology, public policy, economics, sociology, and statistics. The NIEER team includes Senior Co-Director Ellen Frede, Ph.D., Co-Director for Research Milagros Nores, Ph.D. eight additional research faculty, senior project administrators and staff, project coordinators and additional research and policy project support staff, a communications team, and a fiscal and administrative support group led by the Associate Director, Valerie Werstler. In addition, NIEER has external Fellows who collaborate with NIEER from time to time. NIEER has been awarded \$75 million in external funding from its inception to August 2017.

In what follows we provide brief descriptions of selected projects that characterize the major work of NIEER. In addition to these activities, we always have smaller projects in process or development and NIEER faculty and staff contribute to scholarship and service more broadly; for example, by serving on editorial and advisory boards, and reviewing for journals and funding competitions nationally and internationally.

## ONGOING & RECENT PROJECTS

### POLICY RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

#### The State Preschool Survey and Yearbook

NIEER produces the [only national annual survey tracking](#) funding, access, and policies of state preschool programs, and has done so since 2002. This unique survey has been funded by the National Center for Education Statistics of the US Department of Education, in recent years. Support to produce and disseminate a report based on data from the survey is funded by the Heising-Simons Foundation. The survey serves as a resource for policymakers, advocates, and researchers, and the survey and report are essential resources for the field. Surveys recently were sent to states to begin data collection for The State of Preschool 2017. Support for this year's supplemental survey on supports for Dual Language Learners comes from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Contacts: Steve Barnett and Allison Friedman-Krauss

#### Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO)

Now entering its sixth year, [CEELO](#) is one of 22 Comprehensive Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. CEELO provides technical assistance and leadership training to strengthen the capacity of State Education Agencies (SEAs) to lead sustained improvements in early learning opportunities and outcomes. With responsibility to serve SEAs in every state and territory, CEELO has a tremendous scope. CEELO is a partnership with the Education Development Center and the Council of Chief State School Officers and works with the national organization of state pre-K administrators on an annual national meeting, in which most states participate, that addresses key policy issues. CEELO has been extended two years beyond its original five-year award at which time we expect it to be re-competed. Contacts: Steve Barnett and Lori Connors-Tadros

#### Alliance for Early Success

The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes, a project of NIEER, is conducting research and providing technical assistance to state policy makers and advocates on issues impacting learning for children, birth through age eight. CEELO has supported a State Policy Learning Table on workforce policy, conducted cost of quality studies with selected states, and continues to provide research and technical assistance to states upon request. Contact: Lori Connors-Tadros

#### CityHealth Initiative

NIEER compiled [data on policies for state and local pre-kindergarten](#) (pre-K) efforts for the 44 largest cities including the District of Columbia. This dataset, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation, contains coding questions examining policies for state and local pre-k efforts, including an analysis of state and locally funded pre-K programs by evaluating programs against NIEER's 2015 Yearbook benchmarks and enrollment of eligible preschool aged children. Contact: GG Weisenfeld

#### State(s) of Head Start

NIEER released the first [State\(s\) of Head Start report](#) in December 2016, profiling enrollment, funding, quality, teacher qualifications, and program duration in each state and six U.S. territories. The report focused on the 2014-2015 school year but also showed longitudinal trends in key areas dating back to 2007. *States of Head Start*, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, found substantial variation in Head Start implementation across the country. Contact: Steve Barnett, Project Coordinator: Allison Friedman-Krauss

#### PNC-NIEER: A Strategic Partnership in Support of Early Learning in the States

NIEER fiscal research and analysis supports PNC leadership in *Grow Up Great* policy activities. Contact: Steve Barnett.

### **Implementing 15 Essential Elements for High Quality: A State and Local Policy Scan**

In the [Essential Elements report](#), supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, NIEER examined the extent to which all states, the District of Columbia, and three large cities support high-quality publicly funded preschool education. The framework for the assessment of state capacity is provided by “15 essential elements” of high-quality pre-K. This project will be updated in 2017-18. Contact: Steve Barnett

## **PROGRAM EVALUATION**

### **Understanding How Public Preschool Can Achieve and Maintain High Quality**

NIEER, with the support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, recently launched a multi-year study with more than 1,000 children and their parents in 16 New Jersey school districts to generate knowledge on how to bring quality early education to scale. A particular focus of this study is the impact of program quality on young children’s activity and stress levels as key determinants of health. NIEER’s research will focus on school districts serving populations with high levels of economic and social disadvantage. We will compare and contrast districts with programs of varying quality including some formerly known as “Abbott districts” that have sustained very high-quality programs serving both 3- and 4-year-olds for many years, as well as similar districts newly funded to provide high quality pre-k programs to 4-year-olds. NIEER will investigate how preschool policies and practices at school district, school, and classroom levels influence quality and children’s learning, development, and health. Specifically, NIEER will explore leadership/supervision, curriculum, teacher evaluation and professional development and engagement of families and communities. Although this study is conducted in New Jersey, we expect it to have national implications. Contacts: Steve Barnett, Ellen Frede and Milagros Nores

### **PHLpre-K**

This study funded by the William Penn Foundation is a multi-year, multi-site study that employs a combination of methods and designs to assess the program components, program quality, and impacts on children’s learning and development of Philadelphia’s pre-kindergarten program. Contacts: Steve Barnett and Milagros Nores

### **West Virginia**

A longitudinal evaluation of the impacts of universal Pre-K across seven counties in West Virginia in partnership with Marshall University. Student outcomes are examined in vocabulary, literacy, and math. Classroom quality is also examined and reported for continuous improvement. Contacts: Milagros Nores and Shannon Riley-Ayers.

### **Seattle Preschool Program**

We have partnered with the University of Washington to evaluate its preschool program in a multi-year and multi-site study that uses child evaluations on learning and development, as well as classroom observations. The study aims to understand the contributions of the program to the City and the improvements in the program over time. Contacts: Steve Barnett and Milagros Nores

### **Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative**

We are conducting a process evaluation of the Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative (ELNC) to provide information on the process through which ELNC enacts their seven preschool programs. The goal is to enhance the delivery and services of the program as well as to increase the accessibility and capacity of the program. Contacts: Nicole DiCrecchio and Milagros Nores

### **Examining the Role of Coaches in Pre-K Implementation**

This study investigates the role of coaches working to support teachers and leaders in the implementation of the New York City Pre-K program. Funding is provided by the Foundation for Child Development. Researchers will define who the coaches are and report how the coaches’ time is divided among various responsibilities and activities. Contacts: Shannon Riley-Ayers and Sharon Ryan

### **Documenting and Evaluating the Adaptation of the AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program for Diverse Cultures**

Evaluation of model implementation and cultural adaptations as well as impacts on children and parents through a randomized trial. Funding was provided by AVANCE (Kellogg) and the Heising-Simons Foundation. Contact: Milagros Nores

## **NEW JERSEY: SUPPORTING STATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Preschool Education Expansion Aid Technical Assistance Project**

NIEER faculty and staff are working with a selected set of school districts in New Jersey to form an ECE Critical Friends Network. The aim of the network is to encourage districts to apply for state funding recently approved to expand preschool access for as many children as possible and to develop and implement a high-quality plan for expansion. Districts were selected to provide models of innovative practices to inform anticipated preschool expansion in later years. Contact: Ellen Frede

### **NJDOE APPLES RDD & Pre-Post Study**

The Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study (APPLES) evaluates the long-term educational impact of pre-K on children's learning and school success. NIEER has entered into an MOA with the state to continue the longitudinal analysis of the APPLES I and APPLES II studies through the beginning of high school and middle school, respectively. The most recent follow-up was through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. In September 2017 we expect to receive a data update that will allow us to follow-up into 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Contacts: Steve Barnett and Allison Friedman-Krauss

### **New Jersey Early Childhood Academy**

Co-sponsored by NIEER, CEELO and the New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood (NJDOE/DECE), the EC Academy strives to build communities of practice among New Jersey school districts to provide support in their understanding of critical topics and their application to early childhood. Contact: Shannon Riley-Ayers; Coordinator: Alexandra Figueras-Daniel

### **Grow NJ Kids Validation Study**

This study seeks to validate the Grow NJ Kids Quality Rating Improvement System by identifying which aspects of Grow NJ Kids are effective at promoting program quality and enhancing children's development. Contacts: Steve Barnett, Kwanghee Jung, and Jessica Francis

### **New Jersey Implementation Guidelines for First through Third Grade**

Development of a guiding document for implementation of best practices in early elementary school. Development and delivery of professional learning and resources for teachers and district leaders on the content of the guidelines. Contacts: Shannon Riley-Ayers and Sharon Ryan

### **New Jersey Preschool Quality Evaluation**

This study is an examination of the preschool classroom quality in the 31 former Abbott districts and four expansion districts that were added in 2008-09. The examination is used to track quality over time to identify areas requiring additional supports and now provides well over a decade of data. Contacts: Steve Barnett and Jessica Francis

### **New Jersey Preschool Expansion Study**

This study is an examination of the preschool classroom quality in the state's 16 federal preschool expansion grant (PEG) districts. The examination is used to track quality over time to identify areas requiring additional supports. Contacts: Steve Barnett and Jessica Francis

### **New Jersey Preschool Self-contained Evaluation**

This study is an examination of the preschool classroom quality in self-contained classrooms across the state of NJ. The examination is used to track quality over time to identify areas requiring additional supports. Contacts: Steve Barnett and Jessica Francis

### **Kindergarten Continuous Improvement Cycle Coaching in Passaic**

This project uses the Continuous Improvement Cycle, including implementation and evaluation of research-based best practices for early learning grounded in the best practices recommended in the New Jersey Department of Education's Kindergarten Guidelines through use of job-embedded professional development. The goal of both analysis and coaching is to foster change as well as to disseminate the successful elements of the protocol district wide. Contacts: Alexandra Figueras-Daniel and Shannon Riley-Ayers

## **INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS**

### **AeioTu Randomized Longitudinal Study**

We conducted a randomized trial to assess both short- and long-term impacts of a large-scale effort to improve the quality of early care and education for disadvantaged young children in Colombia. [The study](#) was funded by the Jacobs Foundation and the UBS Optimum Foundation. It assesses the impacts on cognitive, linguistic, nutritional and social-emotional development of a comprehensive nutritional and educational intervention provided through full-day child care for children birth to age 5. Participants are 1,216 low-income children and their families. Contact: Milagros Nores

### **Partnership with the Korean Institute for Child Care and Education**

Joint agreement for comparative research, faculty/student exchanges and co-editing the [International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy](#). Journal editors: Namhee Woo, president KICCE, and Steve Barnett

### **Training for the Application of Standardized Instruments to Assess Early Child Development**

Contract to support the work of the Inter-American Development Bank in the Dominican Republic, in terms of creating local capacity to assess infants and toddlers in large-scale research. Contact: Milagros Nores.

## **STEM**

### **Supports for Science and Mathematics Learning in Pre-Kindergarten Dual Language Learners: Designing and Expanding a Professional Development System (SciMath-DLL)**

Scales up and expands professional development supports to integrate high-quality math and science instruction with supports for preschool dual language learners (DLLs) in partnership with Puerto Rican Action Board (PRAB) early childhood centers in New Brunswick and funded by the NSF. Contact: Alexandra Figueras-Daniel

### **The Math and Science Story Time (MASST) Program**

Provides preschool-age children from New Brunswick the opportunity to participate in eight Spanish-English bilingual math and science story and activity sessions at the public library. Contact: Hebbah El-Moslimany

## **ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM**

### **Measuring and Improving Supports for Dual Language Learners**

The Classroom Assessment for Supports of Emergent Bilingual Acquisition ([CASEBA](#)) and Self-Evaluation of Supports for Emergent Bilingual Acquisition ([SESEBA](#)) are conceptually linked tools to assess adequacy of instruction for dual language learners. The CASEBA is reserved for use in research studies and the SESEBA is used as a focal point for a comprehensive professional development model.

The underlying premise of the tools is that high quality and meaningful interactions in the home language along with intentional and well-planned strategies for English language learning are the best approaches to enhancing

bilingual acquisition. Our current focus is to investigate the validity of the CASEBA with greater refinement and refining training materials. Contacts: Alexandra Figueras-Daniel and Ellen Frede

### **Early Learning Scale**

[Systematic assessment](#) for preschool and kindergarten children designed for teachers to assess children's progress toward learning standards. It is currently implemented in districts in New Jersey, all preschools in West Virginia and elsewhere throughout the country and internationally at a program in China. Contact: Shannon Riley-Ayers

### **Teacher Survey for Early Education Quality**

Self-report survey for early childhood teachers regarding their classroom practices and quality. The TSEEQ may offer more cost-effective examination of classroom quality and is therefore a significant contribution to the field. Contact: Shannon Riley-Ayers