



## Press Release

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### **State-Funded Pre-K on Slow Road to Recovery Says National Report**

#### **After stagnation, growth accelerates in New York pre-K due to bold leaders**

*Washington, D.C.* — State funded preschool education, hard hit by the Great Recession, has turned the corner and in many states is back on an expansion track according to the national survey of the states done annually by the nonpartisan National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University. For the second year in a row, NIEER's data show that, nationally speaking, the states have increased funding for pre-K.

Adjusted for inflation, state funding for pre-K increased by nearly \$120 million in 2013-2014 across all 50 states and Washington, DC. Enrollment growth also resumed, albeit modestly, with a total increase of 8,335 slots to reach its highest level recorded over the report's 12-year history. And program quality standards increased as an unprecedented seven states gained ground on NIEER's 10 benchmarks for quality standards.

New York's pre-K program had a mixed record in 2013-2014. With an increase of \$177 in per child spending, New York improved 4 positions to rank 22<sup>nd</sup> among 41 states with state-funded pre-K in 2013-2014. The state maintained its national ranking of 10th in access for 4-year-olds, despite enrolling fewer children in the state-funded program. Rankings for access and resources remain below 2002 ratings when the state ranked 5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> respectively, and resources have yet to return to pre-recession levels. For the third consecutive year, New York meets 7 of 10 research-based quality standards benchmarks.

"Recent developments since 2013-2014 tell a new story about the direction New York is heading," said NIEER Director Steven Barnett. "Thanks to leadership at the state and local level, New York made two new major state investments in pre-K programs the past 2 years, which resulted in thousands of additional children now receiving pre-K. Together with a recently awarded federal Preschool Development Grant to support these expansion efforts, important steps are being taken toward truly achieving New York's mandate for universal pre-K."

"It is heartening to see state funded pre-K, once the fastest growing area in the entire education sector, back on the road to recovery," said NIEER director Steve Barnett, "but given that the states cut half a billion dollars in funding in 2011-2012 and a number of states have yet to address those cuts, much work remains to be done."

Joined at the press conference by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Barnett called on all levels of government to dedicate additional resources to preschool education in order to bridge the gap. "Unfortunately, the effects of the recession landed hardest on preschool-age children and our future prosperity depends on their future productivity," he said.

Barnett said that in addition to adequate funding, state pre-K should have adequate quality and serve all children under 200 percent of poverty. Bold leaders from both major parties are moving some states and cities dramatically ahead, but far too many states have yet to follow. At the same time, quality preschool is becoming a right for every child in some states; other states offer their children no pre-K at all. And, as some cities move to provide preschool for all, most recently New York and Seattle, other areas of their states are left behind.

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*The National Institute for Early Education Research ([www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org)) at the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research.*