



Press Release

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OHIO INCREASES FUNDING FOR PRESCHOOL *Enrollment Nearly Doubles in Two Years*

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.

Ohio added \$10 million to expand its pre-K program in 2013-2014, and the addition of \$12 million for 2014–2015 nearly doubles the enrollment of 4-year-olds. Ohio improved in the rankings for access to pre-K for this age group, moving up from 39th to 36th among states with programs. The state continued to rank 21st in spending per child. The program achieves 4 of NIEER's 10 benchmarks for quality standards.

"The Recession hit states hard and Ohio was among the hardest hit," said NIEER Director Steven Barnett. "Still, they demonstrated that the education of young children is an important priority and are making strides with smart investments including a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant to make early education more accessible and return to better days. There remains room for improvement, such in the number of NIEER benchmarks for quality standards met, but the direction the state is heading is certainly encouraging."

"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 cities and states dramatically ahead, but far too many states have yet to follow. As some cities move to provide preschool for all, most recently New York and Seattle, other areas of their states are left behind. 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.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (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.