



## Press Release

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### **2016 STATE OF PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK SHOWS MAINE INCREASING FUNDING AND EXPANDING ENROLLMENT**

*Maine also enhances quality standards*

New Brunswick, NJ — Maine increased preschool funding 25 percent to \$17.4 million and expanded enrollment to more than 40 percent of state 4-year-olds, 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.

Maine's Public Preschool Program enrolled 5,177 4-year-olds, 40.2 percent of state 4-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. 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 Maine providing resources and policies supporting preschool quality, improving dramatically on NIEER’s current quality standards this year, but work is needed to expand access to the high-quality pre-K that can help children get the best possible start in life.”

In Maine:

- Total state funding was \$17,421,403 in 2015-2016, a 25 percent increase of \$3.5 million from 2014-2015
- Maine's Public Preschool Program served 5,177 4-year-olds, an increase of 380 4-year-olds from 2014-2015
- Maine ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in access for 4-year-olds, out of 44 states, and did not serve any 3-year-olds
- State funding per child was \$3,201, an increase of \$465 from 2014-2015, adjusted for inflation, ranking 37<sup>th</sup> nationwide
- Including federal and local dollars, all-reported spending per child was \$8,371. Maine ranked 7<sup>th</sup> on this indicator
- Maine met nine of NIEER's 10 current quality standards benchmarks, and increase of four from 2014-2015
- The state received a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant leading to 434 additional children attending high-quality public preschool

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.

Maine met nine 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. They 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, ongoing-coaching, and individualized professional development plans for both lead and assistant teachers.

“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](http://www.nieer.org).*