



## Press Release

73 Easton Avenue • New Brunswick, NJ 08901 • Phone 848.932.4350 • Fax 732.932.4360 • [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org)

**For Immediate Release: Wednesday May 24, 2017**

Contact:

Justin Greenberg

[justin.greenberg@berlinrosen.com](mailto:justin.greenberg@berlinrosen.com)

202-800-7410

Michelle Ruess

[mruess@nieer.org](mailto:mruess@nieer.org)

848-932-4350

### **2016 STATE OF PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK SHOWS STATE WASHINGTON AMONG LEADING STATES IN RESOURCES, QUALITY**

*Washington makes progress on funding for quality while enrolling more children*

New Brunswick, NJ — Washington boosted funding by 26 percent for its Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and improved its relatively low enrollment of both 3- and 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.

Washington's funding for ECEAP exceeded \$97 million while enrollment totaled 11,691 children, about 6.5 percent of 3- and 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 8 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 Washington making progress on enrollment and spending but more work is needed to expand access to the high-quality pre-K that helps children get the best possible start in life.”

In Washington:

- Total funding for ECEAP was \$97 million, up 26 percent or almost \$20.3 million, adjusted for inflation from 2014-2015.
- Enrollment increased 16 percent, or 1,600 additional 3- and 4-year-olds compared to 2014-2015.
- Washington served almost 9 percent of 4-year-olds, ranking 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 44 states, the same as last year. The state also served more than 4 percent of 3-year-olds, ranking 17<sup>th</sup> out of the 29 states that serve 3-year-olds.
- Funding per child was \$8,305, up \$693 from 2014-2015. Washington ranked 4<sup>th</sup> on state resources per child, up from 8<sup>th</sup> last year.
- ECEAP meets nine of NIEER's current quality standards benchmarks; the program does not require lead teachers to have bachelor's degrees.
- Washington's Department of Early Learning identified a new strategic goal to ensure 90 percent of the state's children are kindergarten-ready by 2020.

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.

Washington met seven of NIEER's new quality standards benchmarks, including the new requirement for supports for curriculum implementation. The also meet the new requirement for early learning and development standards that are culturally sensitive, supports, and aligned with other state standards and child assessments. However, current policies fell short on the new continuous quality improvement system benchmark and on requirements for 15 hours of ongoing professional development per year for assistant teachers and professional development plans for all lead and assistant teachers. Washington is engaged in work to bolster state-pre-K quality as they work to serve all eligible children.

“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).*