

The state of preschool 2016: State preschool yearbook ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Executive summary ^[3]

OVERVIEW

State of Preschool 2016 is the latest edition of our annual yearbook report profiling state-funded prekindergarten programs in the United States. NIEER's State 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, such as the presence of a qualified teacher and assistant, small class size, and low teacher-to-student ratio.

This Yearbook presents data on state-funded preschool during the 2015-2016 school year and documents more than a decade of change in state preschool since the first Yearbook collected data on the 2001-2002 school year. The 2016 Yearbook profiles state-funded preschool programs in 43 states, plus Guam and the District of Columbia and provides narrative information on early education efforts in states and the U.S. territories that do not provide state-funded preschool.

Nationwide, state-funded preschool program enrollment reached an all-time high, serving nearly 1.5 million children, 32 percent of 4-year-olds and 5 percent of 3-year-olds. State funding for preschool rose 8 percent to about \$7.4 billion, a \$564 million increase. State funding per child increased to \$4,976, exceeding pre-recession levels for the first time. Six state funded preschool programs 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.

Current benchmarks were designed to help states build programs, focusing on resources and policies related to the structural aspects of public preschool—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. 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.

The 2016 Yearbook is organized into three major sections. The first section offers a summary of the data and describes national trends in enrollment, quality standards, and spending for state-funded preschool. It also details the changes made to create our new benchmarks. The second section presents detailed profiles outlining each state's policies with respect to preschool access, quality standards, and resources for the 2015-2016 year. A description of our methodology follows the state profiles, and the last section of the report will contain appendices, when the data is fully available. The appendices will include tables that provide the complete 2015-2016 survey data obtained from every state, as well as Head Start, child care, U.S. Census, and special education data.

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