



Press Release

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BIG GAINS FOR MICHIGAN STATE PRE-K *Funding, Quality Standards and Enrollment All on the Rise*

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.

In the past 2 years, more than 14,000 additional 4-year-olds have enrolled in Michigan's free high quality preschool, making it one of the largest preschool expansions in the nation. In 2014, \$65 million was added to the program, in addition to the \$65M that was added in 2013. This expansion was extremely effective. Michigan now meets 8 of 10 benchmarks for quality standards, improved from a decade ago when it met 5. In 2013-2014, Michigan met the benchmark for site visits after implementing a new policy for monitoring. In addition, the average classroom time for Great Start Readiness Program pupils is now more than five hours, an increase of 30 percent in two years.

Governor Rick Snyder said: "All children should have the opportunity for career or college readiness and success in life, and it's important they get their education off to the best start possible. For many, that means access to a high-quality preschool. Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program will help reduce retention rates, increase academic performance and boost graduation rates. This is why over the last two years, our state has invested an additional \$130 million into the program – the largest increase in early childhood education in the country. It's important that all children have a solid educational foundation that will lead to a lifetime of learning."

"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.