



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

For Immediate Release

Date: April 19, 2021

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National Report Applauds New Jersey's Leadership in Preschool Education

Trenton, NJ – A national report on the state of preschool commends New Jersey for its continued commitment to preschool, even while facing the COVID-19 pandemic.

"For the third year in a row, Governor Murphy allocated new funding for preschool expansion in the 2019-2020 school year," said the *State of Preschool Yearbook*, a report by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education. The report is based on data from the 2019-2020 school year and the Fiscal Year 2021 budget.

"Other states should follow New Jersey's lead with renewed commitments to high-quality pre-K for all, beginning with those in the lowest income families," NIEER added, noting how, prior to the pandemic, New Jersey saw large increases in enrollment and inflation-adjusted spending, and maintained high quality standards – and in 2020-2021, committed an additional \$10 million to further expand access to high quality preschool.

"Despite the unprecedented fiscal challenges that COVID-19 posed to New Jersey, growing and improving our state's preschool program has continued to be at the forefront of our minds," said First Lady Tammy Murphy, who recently joined other dignitaries in a virtual panel discussion to announce the release of the report. "It has been a central priority of our Administration since day one, and the pandemic has further underscored that a high-quality, standards-aligned early childhood education is critically important."

A high-quality program is designated as a full-day program with a certificated teacher, an aide, and small classes that are inclusive of children with special needs who have individualized education programs.

"Reports like the one announced today reaffirm New Jersey's efforts to serve as a leader in education, from preschool to beyond graduation," said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education. "We continue to strive toward our goal of making New Jersey the best place to educate a child."

Since taking office, Governor Murphy has provided funding to expanded or new preschool programs in more than 100 New Jersey school districts that previously did not have high-quality preschool. In the 2019-2020 school year, New Jersey preschool programs enrolled 55,413 children. The Governor's proposed state budget for Fiscal Year 2022 would allocate more than \$924 million for preschool education, an increase of \$50 million from the previous year's budget.

The statement from NIEER also noted that New Jersey not only has been expanding preschool to more school districts, but also that it is one of few states to emphasize serving children beginning at age 3. The full report can be found on the [NIEER website](#).



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