

# ***The State of Preschool 2010: The SECA States***

***The Latest in the Yearbook Series from the  
National Institute for Early Education Research***

Southern Early Childhood Association



**SECA Policy Brief  
June 2011**

## Some Highlights from the Report

Nationally, the effects of the recession became apparent in regard to funding of programs and total enrollment. Total enrollment barely increased over the prior year and total spending by states decreased. State funded pre-K served 1,292,310 children in the 2009-2010 school year, the majority of them 3-and 4-year olds. (Four-year-olds accounted for more than 1 million of that total.)

Forty (40) states nationally provided pre-K, and thirteen (13) of the fourteen (14) SECA states provided a state funded pre-K program. Mississippi did not have a pre-K program.

According to the report, in 2010:

- Seventy-five (75) percent of 4-year-olds in Oklahoma, Florida and West Virginia were enrolled in public programs (including Head Start).
- Georgia slipped from third to fourth for enrollment as it was surpassed by West Virginia.
- Kentucky was a leader, along with Illinois, New Jersey, Nebraska and California, in serving children at age 3.

The report also highlighted some “new” national statistics.

- ✓ Total state funding for pre-K decreased by nearly \$30 million and would have fallen by at least an additional \$49.3 million if not for funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This is the first time since NIEER began tracking spending that total spending declined from the previous year.
- ✓ State pre-K spending per child decreased by \$114 to \$4,028, adjusted for inflation.
- ✓ After adjusting for inflation, state funding per child declined in 19 of 40 states with programs.
- ✓ Only seventeen (17) states provided enough funding to meet all 10 benchmarks for quality standards.
- ✓ Total enrollment nationally increased by 26,996 children.
- ✓ Four (4) states improved on NIEER’S Quality Standards checklist, while two states lost ground on standards.
- ✓ Twenty-three (23) of forty (40) states failed to meet NIEER benchmarks for teacher qualifications and twenty six (26) failed to meet the benchmark for assistant teacher qualifications.

Source: Executive Summary, **The State of Preschool 2010-State Preschool Yearbook**, National Institute for Early Education Research, [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org), p.4.



In 2010, “....the bad news outweighed the good. The decline in spending per child comes on top of the previous year’s decline. Many states already failed to provide enough funding to ensure programs could meet minimum quality standards, so this is a serious problem. Rather than raising quality, states are struggling not to lose what they have.”

## **NIEER’s Definition of a State Preschool Program**

The *State Yearbook Series* focuses on state-funded preschool education that meets the following criteria:

1. The program is *funded, controlled and directed by the state*.
2. The program *serves children of preschool age*, usually 3 and/or 4. Programs that serve only infants and toddlers are excluded from the definition.
3. *Early childhood education is the primary focus* of the program. The definition excludes programs that focus mainly on parent education and parent work status or child eligibility tied to work status.
4. The program *offers a group learning experience* to children at least two days a week.
5. The program is *distinct from the state’s system of subsidized child care*; however, these programs may be integrated and coordinated with the state’s subsidized child care system.
6. The program is *not primarily designed to serve children with disabilities*.
7. *State supplemental funding to Head Start* is counted as a state preschool program if the funding substantially expands the number of children served and if the state assumes some administrative responsibility for the program.

Source: Executive Summary, ***The State of Preschool 2009-State Preschool Yearbook***, National Institute for Early Education Research, [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org)



## Highlights from the SECA States

Although the 2009 -2010 program year was fiscally challenging for all SECA states, we continued to make progress and to lead the nation in providing state-funded pre-K for our children. Reduction of resources was minimal while some states enacted additional quality benchmark standards. With the fiscal situation remaining a significant challenge in most SECA states, it remains to be seen whether the region can maintain the status quo in pre-K in 2010-2011.

### ACCESS

Of the top ten (10) states serving 4-year-olds in 2009-2010, the SECA region had six (6) of the ten states. In the 2008-2009 year, the SECA region had seven (7) of the top ten. In 2009-2010, South Carolina dropped from #10 to #11 nationally.

- ❖ **Oklahoma** was **#1** with 70.7% served in Pre-K.
- ❖ **Florida** was **#2** with 68.1% served in pre-K.
- ❖ **West Virginia** was **#3** with 55.3% served in Pre-K. They improved in ranking from #5 the previous year.
- ❖ **Georgia** was **#4** with 54.6% served in Pre-K. They were surpassed in 2009-2010 by West Virginia and lost their #3 ranking.
- ❖ **Texas** maintained its ranking of **#7** with 46.8% served in Pre-K.
- ❖ **Arkansas** fell to **#9** with 41.1% served in Pre-K. New York achieved the #8 rank held the previous year by Arkansas.

The other SECA states had these national ranks for serving 4-year-olds:

- ❖ **South Carolina** was **#11** with 37.9% served in Pre-K.
- ❖ **Alabama** was **#33**, up from #34, with 6.2% served in Pre-K.
- ❖ **Kentucky** remained at **#15** with 29.4% served.
- ❖ **Louisiana** dropped to **#13** from #12 with 32.3% served.
- ❖ **North Carolina** dropped to **#20** from #17 with 23.9% served.
- ❖ **Tennessee** dropped to **#21** from #18 with 21.4% served.
- ❖ **Virginia** dropped to **#27** from #25 with 14.3% served.

With six (6) states in the top 10, another **four (4) states (South Carolina, Kentucky, Louisiana, and North Carolina)** were in the top 20 of states with access to state funded Pre-K.

**Mississippi** continued to be the only SECA state without a state funded Pre-K in 2009/2010.



Source: Executive Summary, *The State of Preschool 2010-State Preschool Yearbook*, National Institute for Early Education Research, [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org), Table 2, p. 12.

### Changes in Pre-school Enrollment from 2001/2002 to 2009/2010

State	Change in 3-year-olds	Percent change	Change in 4-year-olds	Percent change
Alabama	0	n/a	3,114	411.9%
Arkansas	2,539	269.5%	14,359	645.6%
Florida	0	n/a	155,877	n/a
Georgia	0	n/a	17,564	27.6%
Kentucky	685	14.1%	3,925	30.6%
Louisiana	0	n/a	12,829	170.6%
Mississippi	0	n/a	0	n/a
North Carolina	0	n/a	29,957	2,415.9%
Oklahoma	0	n/a	11,477	44.3%
South Carolina	1,395	398.6%	7,168	45.8%
Tennessee	-193	-22.9%	15,845	901.3%
Texas	1,837	9.3%	65,011	51.0%
Virginia	0	n/a	9,066	154.2%
West Virginia	55	3.1%	6,437	126.6%

Source: Executive Summary, *The State of Preschool 2010-State Preschool Yearbook*, National Institute for Early Education Research, [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org) Table 3, p.13.

### Changes in Pre-school Enrollment from 2008/2009 to 2009/2010

State	Change in 3-year-olds	Percent change	Change in 4-year-olds	Percent change
Alabama	0	n/a	486	14.4%
Arkansas	1,136	48.4%	-435	-2.6%
Florida	0	n/a	8,115	5.5%
Georgia	0	n/a	2,867	3.7%
Kentucky	-86	-1.5%	900	5.7%
Louisiana	0	n/a	628	3.2%
Mississippi	0	n/a	0	n/a
North Carolina	0	n/a	-288	-0.9%
Oklahoma	0	n/a	1,314	3.6%
South Carolina	-711	-28.9%	408	1.8%
Tennessee	-17	-2.6%	35	0.2%
Texas	2,611	13.8%	11,586	6.4%
Virginia	0	n/a	359	2.5%
West Virginia	60	3.4%	678	6.3%

**SECA Note:** In a time of fiscal austerity, some states chose to backtrack on serving 3-year-olds and others chose to reduce the amount per child that was spent in order to maintain or enhance 4-year-old enrollment. **Arkansas, Texas** and **West Virginia** increased enrollment in their 3-year-old programs.

Source: Executive Summary, *The State of Preschool 2010-The State Yearbook*, National Institute for Early Education Research, [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org), Table 3, p. 13.



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## QUALITY

Most of the SECA states met at least 7 of the 10 quality benchmarks in 2009-2010; however, only three states, **Alabama, Louisiana (NSECD)** and **North Carolina** scored a perfect 10. The ten quality standards include:

- Comprehensive early learning standards
- Minimum teacher requirement: BA
- Specialized teacher training in Pre-K
- Assistant teacher has a CDA or equivalent
- Teachers must attend at least 15 hours a year of in-service training
- Maximum class size: 20
- Maximum staff child/ratio: 1:10
- Support services are required (vision, hearing, health)
- At least one meal is provided each day
- Monitoring site visits are required and conducted

According to the report:

**Alabama** scored a perfect **10** with all of the standards in place.

**Arkansas** met **9 of the 10** standards, missing on the teacher requirement for a BA degree.

**Florida** met only **3 of the 10** standards with only comprehensive learning standards, class size of less than 20, and monitoring site visits in place.

**Georgia** met **9 of the 10** standards, missing on the teacher BA requirement and **adding a requirement for support services**.

**Kentucky** met **9 of the 10** standards, missing on the assistant teacher credential and **adding a standard for monitoring site visits**.

**Louisiana** has three programs that were rated. **Louisiana (8g)** met **8 of the 10** standards, **adding a standard on specialized training**, missing on assistant teacher credentials and support services. **LA4** met **9 of the 10** standards, missing only on the assistant teacher credentials.

**Louisiana (NSECD)** met all **10** of the standards.

**North Carolina** met all **10** of the standards.

**Oklahoma** met **9 of the 10** standards, missing only on the assistant teacher credentials.



**South Carolina** also has multiple programs. **South Carolina (4K)** met **6 of the 10** standards, missing on assistant teacher credentials, support services, meals and site visits. **South Carolina (CDEPP)** met **7 of the 10** standards, missing on the teacher and assistant teacher credentials and support services.

**Tennessee** met **9 of the 10** standards, missing only on the assistant teacher credentials.

**Texas** met **4 of the 10** standards, with only the learning standards, teacher credentials, specialized training and in-service requirements in place.

**Virginia** met **7 of the 10** standards, **dropping the teacher requirement for a BA**, missing on the assistant teacher credentials and meal requirement.

**West Virginia** met **8 of the 10** standards, missing on teacher and assistant teacher credentials and **adding the meal requirement standard**.

Source: Executive Summary, *The State of Preschool 2010-State Preschool Yearbook*, National Institute for Early Education Research, [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org), Table 5, p. 15.

## RESOURCES

Only four (4) of the SECA states (**Florida, Kentucky, South Carolina, Texas**) fell out of the top 20 states nationally based on resources provided per child in state Pre-K. Texas replaced Virginia in the group outside of the top 20, and Virginia moved up in rank to 19<sup>th</sup> nationally.

### National 2009-2010 Resources Rank for SECA States

State	Resources Rank Based on State Spending	State \$ Per Child Enrolled in Pre-K	All Reported \$ Per Child Enrolled in Pre-K	Change in state per-pupil spending from 2007-2008/2008-2009
Alabama	15	\$4,544	\$4,544	-\$595
Arkansas	11	\$5,414	\$8,388	-\$13
Florida	34	\$2,514	\$2,514	\$63
Georgia	20	\$4,206	\$4,212	-\$31
Kentucky	30	\$3,103	\$6,290	-\$398
Louisiana	14	\$4,706	<b>\$4,804</b>	-\$600
North Carolina	13	\$5,239	\$7,824	-\$180
Oklahoma	16	\$4,477	\$7,855	\$389
South Carolina	38	\$1,446	\$3,244	-\$188
Tennessee	17	\$4,445	\$5,688	-\$79
Texas	25	\$3,686	\$3,686	-\$108
Virginia	19	\$4,221	\$6,288	\$194
West Virginia	10	\$5,521	\$9,413	\$251

SECA Note: Florida reported utilizing funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for pre-K. Those funds are included in the state funding amounts reported.



Nine (9) of the 14 SECA states (**Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee** and **Texas**) reduced their per-pupil expenditures in 2009-2010. Four (4) of the SECA states (**Florida, Oklahoma, Virginia, West Virginia**) increased their per-pupil expenditure in 2009-2010.

Source: Executive Summary, *The State of Preschool 2010-State Preschool Yearbook*, National Institute for Early Education Research, [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org), Table 6, p. 16.

## Some Facts from the SECA States

*In most cases, the following information is excerpted verbatim from the State Profiles of **The State of Preschool 2010-State Preschool Yearbook**, National Institute for Early Education Research, [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org). For the complete profiles by state, go to <http://nieer.org/yearbook/states/>.*

- ❖ First Class: **Alabama's** Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program remains small due to limited resources; however, during the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years, the business community in Alabama has been integral in advocating for preschool education, most notably by recommending funding increases for pre-K to the legislature. The state's goal is to have at least one classroom per county and, as of the 2009-2010 school year, classrooms are offered in all but two counties.
- ❖ The **Arkansas** Better Chance initiative participated in an evaluation for both process quality and program impact/child outcomes through a study that began sampling children in the 2005-2006 school year and continued through the 2009-2010 year. A second study replicating the first study begins in the 2010-2011 school year.
- ❖ Starting in 2010, a change in the **Florida** VPK (Voluntary Pre-K) law allows a public or private VPK provider that has been on probation for two consecutive years and subsequently failed to meet the minimum participation rate set by the state Board of Education to apply for a "good cause" exemption and remain eligible to offer the VPK program. Such programs must serve at least twice the statewide percentage of children with disabilities or children identified as limited English proficient, meet local and state health and safety requirements and submit assessment data documenting children's learning gains. Ongoing data analysis will be used to determine the impact of the exemption.



- ❖ During the 2006-2007 school year, the state implemented the **Georgia** Pre-K Child Assessment Program, which is based on the Work Sampling System. This assessment program allows teachers to provide two progress reports to parents during the year. An online version of the Child Assessment program was piloted in the 2008-2009 program year and the Georgia Testing ID was assigned to pre-K students for the second year in 2009-2010. Both of these actions are part of a plan to facilitate coordination between pre-K and the K-16 system.
- ❖ **Kentucky** implemented the first stage of the Preschool Program Review (P2R) monitoring process through pilots in seven districts in the 2009-2010 school year. The process includes an ECERS-R for every classroom and an online survey, as well as site-visit teams that examine documentation, observe classrooms and interview teachers, administrators and parents. The P2R pilot will continue in the 2010-2011 school year with the goal of establishing assessors in each district.
- ❖ In 2008, **Louisiana** mandated voluntary preschool access for all 4-year-olds regardless of income by the 2013-2014 program year. The Department of Education began coordinating with the Department of Social Services during the 2008-2009 program year to create a professional development plan which would permit cross agency technical assistance and training. As of the 2009-2010 program year, school districts are required to allocate at least 10% of new funding to providing programs in diverse delivery settings.
- ❖ For 2009-2010, the **North Carolina** State Board of Education approved a list of prekindergarten curricula that were aligned with the early learning standards adopted by the Board. An online orientation to the state standards was piloted and available in the 2009-2010 school year....Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction established the Office of Early Learning to focus on the pre-K through grade 3 continuum of learning and development and its impact on high school graduation.
- ❖ Funding for the **Oklahoma** Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program is provided directly to public school districts through the state's school finance formula....Districts may subcontract with other classroom providers by placing public school teachers into child care centers, community based programs, and Head Start programs...Children served in these collaborative programs are still considered public school enrollees and receive the same services as children in public school settings.....Oklahoma supplements the federal Head Start program with funds for extended-day and additional services.



- ❖ The **South Carolina** Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) was created in 2006 to establish full-day pre-K programs as a result of the court decision in *Abbeville County School District v. South Carolina*. These programs were established in the counties covered by the lawsuit and the program is available to children who qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch or Medicaid. Both public schools and private child care centers can participate in the program with approval by the Department of Education for public schools and the Office of First Steps granting approval for private child care. Starting in the 2009-2010 program year, students with a documented developmental delay are also eligible.
- ❖ The **Tennessee** Voluntary Pre-K program was funded through general education revenue and lottery revenue, which enabled the program to expand in the past. However, in the 2009-2010 school year, the program received only inflationary adjustments and no additional expansion funds. Starting in the 2009-2010 program year, all pre-K funding was required to be allocated to the local education authority. Whereas previously the Office of Early Learning (OEL) had contracted directly with various community-based organizations and Head Start, these programs now subcontract with the LEA in which the program resides.
- ❖ In the 2007-2008 school year, the **Texas** Education Code amended its reporting requirements to work with the Texas School Readiness Certification System (SRCS). This quality rating system is meant to improve the school readiness of pre-K students across settings, including Head Start agencies, public preschool programs, and licensed child care centers, both for-profit and non-profit. In the 2009-2010 school year, the SRCS was used in 1,642 preschool classrooms across the state, reaching 29,335 students. Additionally, on-line training on the Texas Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines is now available.
- ❖ Public school districts and local departments of social services receive funding for the **Virginia** Preschool Initiative, though these agencies may subcontract with private child care centers or Head Start programs to offer preschool education services. Programs that operate on a half-day schedule receive 50% of the full-day funding allocation. A local composite index of district resources is used to determine the matching funds contribution required by communities that receive funding for the initiative. As of the 2009-2010 program year, the local match is capped at ½ the per pupil amount regardless of local composite index.
- ❖ Most programs participating in the **West Virginia** Universal Pre-K System use Creative Curriculum in their classrooms, and the state currently uses a web-based portfolio designed around Creative Curriculum. This portfolio allows teachers to track student progress and assessment outcomes as required by the West Virginia Early Learning Standards Framework. This program was evaluated for process



quality in 2009.....In 2010, policy was revised to update the early learning standards and align them with kindergarten content standards and objectives as well as to address school readiness and assessment, with these policy revisions going into effect in the 2010-2011 program year.

## What We Can Learn From the Report

- ✚ Not much has changed between the years of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. The **South's commitment to Pre-K** as a strategy that will improve the educational status of the region has remained strong, in spite of serious budget difficulties in many of the states.
- ✚ Some SECA states have made decisions **to increase access**, sometimes at the expense of quality. **Florida** and **Texas** rank in the top 10 in access but meet very few of the quality standards.
- ✚ **Increasing quality** seems to be the next big challenge for SECA states, and this effort will be directly impacted by the fiscal health of state budgets. In 2008-2009, the states of **Florida, Texas** and **South Carolina (4K)** met fewer than 7 of the 10 quality standards. In 2009-2010, only Florida and Texas met less than 6 of the 10 quality standards, with one of South Carolina's programs (4-K) at the level of 6 of the standards. The other South Carolina (CDEPP) program met 7 of the standards.
- ✚ It appears that one of the **most problematic quality standards** for SECA states is the requirement that assistant teachers/aides meet certification requirements. Only the SECA states of **Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana NSECD** and **North Carolina** are listed as meeting this standard. This may be a resources issue, both in funding and access to educational programs for staff.
- ✚ During the period of 2001/2002 to 2008/2009, the SECA states **increased access for 4-year-olds significantly**, and many states chose to focus their efforts on this age group. The trend of focusing resources on 4-year-olds continued in 2009/2010.
- ✚ Only the SECA states of **Arkansas, Texas** and **West Virginia** enhanced **3-year-old enrollment** during 2009-2010.



- ✚ Two SECA states, **Louisiana** and **South Carolina**, have multiple programs with different programmatic standards. In *Louisiana*, one program meets 8 quality standards (an increase of one standard) , one meets 9 quality standards and one meets all 10 of the quality standards. In *South Carolina*, one program meets 6 of the standards and the other program meets 7 of the standards. The **challenge for these states** may be the administrative structure of the state pre-K initiatives and how to consolidate programs to improve and enhance quality.

