



a campaign of the
Pew Center on the States

News Release

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Pew Report Questions Gov. Paterson's Leadership on Early Education *Proposed decrease in pre-k funding bucks national trend among governors*

WASHINGTON, DC—(May 5, 2009)— New York Gov. David Paterson's FY10 budget missed a crucial opportunity to expand access to early education programs that remain out of reach for many of the state's families, according to a state-by-state analysis released today by Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States.

"While we understand the many challenges involved in correcting the state's pre-k funding and implementation issues, children shouldn't have to wait for bureaucratic and political knots to get untangled before they get the quality early education opportunities they need," said Karen Schimke, co-convenor of the Winning Beginning New York coalition. "Until we make better headway on fulfilling the pre-k-for-all promise, we're shooting ourselves in the foot, economically and educationally."

The non-partisan annual report, "Leadership Matters: Governors' Pre-K Budget Proposals Fiscal Year 2010," evaluates budget proposals for the next year and governors' remarks in recent state of the state addresses to determine which leaders count voluntary, high-quality pre-k among their top education and economic development strategies. The findings underscore a growing interest among federal and state policy makers in targeting limited public resources to effective programs backed by research. This year's report also addresses federal action, such as the Obama administration's inclusion of funding proposals for early education in the stimulus package.

Even as they confront significant economic challenges and whittle spending to core priorities, the majority of the nation's governors are increasing or protecting state investments in pre-k programs in the coming fiscal year.

The report criticizes Gov. Paterson's decision to base FY10 pre-k funding on FY09 spending levels, essentially cutting Universal Pre-Kindergarten's budget by nearly \$50 million and halting the program's growth. In contrast, Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell made early education investments a priority by proposing a 10 percent funding increase for the Pre-K Counts initiative.

“Governor David Paterson’s FY10 budget demonstrated little leadership to improve the state’s troubled pre-k funding system,” said Danielle Gonzales, project manager of Pre-K Now. “The state legislature’s decision to reduce the Universal Pre-Kindergarten budget by \$75 million – a cut \$25 million deeper than what the governor proposed – is of greater concern. New York’s young children deserve leaders who understand the return on investment pre-k produces and who will work to ensure that all children are ready for success in school, work and life.”

Key findings include:

- Fourteen governors are proposing to increase investment in early education.
- Thirteen governors are proposing to “flat-fund” early education programs, preserving current investment levels.
- The governors of Alaska, North Dakota and Rhode Island – states that currently do not provide state-funded pre-k – are proposing new pre-k initiatives.
- The governors of Connecticut, Massachusetts, North Carolina and South Carolina join Gov. Paterson in proposing cuts to pre-k programs.
- Total proposed state investment in pre-k is four percent greater than FY09 appropriations (which were \$5.2 billion in 43 states and the District of Columbia).
- If passed, these proposals would bring total state pre-k funding to \$5.4 billion in 43 states and the District of Columbia in FY10.
- Facing one of the biggest budget shortfalls in the country, New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine is calling for a 14 percent increase in pre-k investment, including the creation of an “incentive fund” to encourage school districts’ use of federal recovery funds to expand pre-k.

Pre-k is one of the most well-researched public education strategies of the last forty years. The preponderance of evidence shows quality early education helps children succeed in school and in life, and results in savings for every dollar invested. Children who complete quality pre-k programs enter school more prepared cognitively and socially, are less likely to be held back or need special education services, are more likely to complete high school, and become more successful and productive adults.

To view a copy of the report and learn more about the early education initiatives of the Pew Center on the States, please visit www.preknow.org or www.pewcenteronthestates.org.

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The Pew Center on the States identifies and advances state policy solutions. Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States, collaborates with advocates and policymakers to lead a movement toward high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds.