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Date: Jan. 29, 2014

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States leading on education priorities cited in State of the Union; president cites ECS research

DENVER – States are taking the lead on several education priorities cited in President Obama’s State of the Union speech on Tuesday, including a greater investment in **preschool** programs.

The president cited research by the Education Commission of the States in noting 30 states increased pre-K funding in 2013, one of the highlights of this [Jan. 9 report](#) analyzing preschool appropriations.

Among other highlights of the report:

- Nationwide, state funding for pre-K increased by \$363.6 million to a total of \$5.6 billion. This is a 6.9% increase in state investment in pre-K programs over fiscal year 2012-13.
- Some state investments are replacing losses incurred during the recession, but most states have surpassed 2008-09 levels. Total investment is \$400 million greater than pre-recession.
- Of the 40 states funding pre-K programs serving primarily 4-year-olds, 30 states and the District of Columbia increased funding for these programs. Ten states increased funding by more than 20%.

In addition to preschool, President Obama referenced support for **English language learners**, the subject of a recent ECS analysis. The [December edition of The Progress of Education Reform](#) focused on the status of English language learners, noting this growing population of U.S. students is underserved.

Among the highlights of the report:

- Nearly 1 in 10 students in U.S. public schools are English language learners.
- In eight states, English language learners comprise nearly 10 percent or more of the population, including 29 percent of California’s public school students.
- The number of English language learners increased in all but 12 states between 2002-03 and 2010-11, with the largest percentage point growth in Kansas, South Carolina, Hawaii and Nevada.

Another focus in the president’s address was partnerships between high schools and colleges, such as **dual enrollment**. ECS released a 50-state database on dual enrollment in December, providing a state-by-state look at the strategy and analyzing issues such as who’s paying the costs.

See [highlights of the analysis](#) and [visit the database](#) to check data on individual states.

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The Education Commission of the States was created by states, for states, in 1965. We track policy, translate research, provide unbiased advice and create opportunities for state policymakers to learn from one another.