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**SPRINGFIELD'S EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS RECOGNIZED IN STATEWIDE REPORT**

*Education Secretary James Peyser, Early Education and Care Commissioner Thomas Weber, and education and business leaders discuss state of education in Western Massachusetts*

**(HAMPDEN COUNTY, MA) June 7, 2018** – Springfield Public Schools is featured in a report released by the [Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy](#) that looks at student progress in Massachusetts while pointing to areas for continued improvement. This year's [Condition of Education in the Commonwealth](#) report highlights Springfield's innovative early childhood education program as a model of success.

The report highlights progress made toward closing achievement gaps and explores key factors that lead to meaningful and sustainable improvement in schools. The report looks at how Springfield increased the number of vulnerable students attending preK and improved the quality of early education by creating a partnership between preschool providers.

"Only 12 percent of students were going into kindergarten prepared, regardless of their preK experience. We realized the district and community-based preK providers needed to come together to align our curriculum and approach to teaching," said Laura Mendes, Director of Literacy, Elementary and Early Childhood Education/Preschool Expansion Grant Program Coordinator for Springfield Public Schools.

This effort was made possible by the federal Preschool Expansion Grant, which provided Springfield with more than \$14 million over four years. The funding has been used to create 195 new preschool seats for children from low-income households and facilitate a partnership among three of the city's preschool providers.

"Springfield and Holyoke's participation in our preschool expansion initiative that uses partnerships and cross-sector alignment to provide high-quality programs, is helping to build a birth-to-third grade early learning system in Massachusetts," said Early Education and Care Commissioner Tom Weber. "Collaborating to strategically leverage the strengths of public preschools and licensed early education programs will help Springfield and Holyoke continue to provide high-quality preschool opportunities for children in these communities."

Education and business leaders gathered in Holyoke on June 5 to discuss the report and the status of education in Western Massachusetts more broadly, touching on the importance of improvement efforts like the one in Springfield. The event was hosted by the Rennie Center and co-sponsored by the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts, Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Springfield Business Leaders for Education, and Springfield Regional Chamber.

The [Condition of Education in the Commonwealth](#) report includes a [data dashboard](#) that looks at 25 state-level indicators of school performance, from early education through college and career readiness. It shows progress over the past five years and highlights disparities in student outcomes based on several factors including income and race. The report's [Action Guide](#) identifies a six-part process that schools and districts can use to make lasting improvements and provides recommendations for state-level support.

“Leaders in the education field are often eager to move on to the next big idea in education reform, but we need to think beyond quick fixes and focus on how we can implement improvements with fidelity,” said Jennifer Poulos, Associate Director of the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy and lead author of the report. “Springfield’s early education programming is a great example of an improvement effort based around a clear problem and driven by educators. We’ve found that these are key ingredients to sustainable change.”

***The Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy’s mission is to improve public education through well-informed decision-making based on deep knowledge and evidence of effective policymaking and practice. As Massachusetts’ preeminent voice in public education reform, we create open spaces for educators and policymakers to consider evidence, discuss cutting-edge issues, and develop new approaches to advance student learning and achievement. Through our staunch commitment to independent, non-partisan research and constructive conversations, we work to promote an education system that provides every child with the opportunity to be successful in school and in life. For more information, please visit [www.renniecenter.org](http://www.renniecenter.org).***

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