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## **2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Problems in Alaska** ***Alaska's preschool program continues to suffer from low funding, enrollment***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, yet Alaska lags behind, serving only 3.5% of 4-year-olds due to stagnated state investments in preschool.

*The State of Preschool 2017* annual report finds states heeding the demand for pre-K and expanding access to publicly funded programs in a variety of settings, based on 2016-17 data. But instead of supporting quality early learning with adequate resources, most state programs invest too little to help children catch up with their more advantaged peers by kindergarten.

In Alaska, state preschool funding and enrollment have both been relatively flat for several years. Capacity was added to the program this year, resulting in additional professional development and technical assistance for programs.

“Our report highlights which states invest best in their young children and which leave too many children behind,” said NIEER Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett. “Alaska has not invested the resources needed to make progress—or even keep pace with the rest of the US.”

This year’s preschool report includes a special section on policies affecting Dual Language Learners, and also highlights changes since 2002, when NIEER began tracking state pre-K. (*see box for Alaska specifics*)

Enrollment in state-funded preschool programs has more than doubled since 2002, according to the report. Nationally, 43 states, D.C. and Guam now provide publicly funded preschool to more than 1.5 million children. However, funding has failed to keep pace, with spending-per-child *decreasing* when adjusted for inflation.

“Fifteen years ago, only three states and the District of Columbia enrolled more than one-third of their 4-year-olds in publicly funded pre-K,” said Dr. Allison Friedman-Krauss, report co-author. “Today, that is the national average. But progress is patchy – 19 states still enroll less than 10% of their 4-year-olds.”

### **ALASKA 2016-2017 Fast Facts**

Met 7 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 358 children, an increase of 39 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$2 million, a decrease of almost \$20,000 from 2015-16, inflation-adjusted

State spending-per-child = \$5,587, compared to \$6,332 in 2015-16

No policies to support preschool Dual Language Learners

National rankings:

- 40 in access for 4-year-olds
- 16 in state spending per child

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*Foundation. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions in this report are solely those of the authors. For more information and detailed state-by-state profiles on quality access, and funding, please visit [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org).*

*The National Institute for Early Education Research ([www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org)) at the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research. For more information, contact: Michelle Ruess [mruess@nieer.org](mailto:mruess@nieer.org) 848-932-4350*