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2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Some Progress in Colorado ***CO expands pre-K enrollment but struggles to meet quality standards benchmarks***

New Brunswick, NJ—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Colorado expanding investment and enrollment, but struggling to meet minimum quality standards benchmarks.

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.

Colorado increased pre-K funding 12% and expanded enrollment to exceed 23% of 4-year-olds and 8% of 3-year-olds. Colorado preschool met five of NIEER's 10 quality standards benchmarks.

"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. "Colorado needs to balance expansion with quality to provide its young children with early learning experiences that can provide long-term benefits."

This year's 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 COLORADO 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."

The State of Preschool 2017 yearbook was supported with funding provided by the Heising-Simons Foundation. Data used in the report come from a general survey funded by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The supplemental survey of state policies related to dual language learners and report was supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates

COLORADO 2016-2017 Fast Facts

Met 5 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 21,622 children, an increase of 126 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$59,948,508, an increase of \$6,295,866 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$2,773, compared to \$2,496 in 2015-16

Colorado permits bilingual instruction in preschool

National rankings:

- 25 in access for 4-year-olds
- 10 in access for 3-year-olds
- 39 in state spending per child

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.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (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 848-932-4350

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