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## **2017 State of Preschool Report Shows Little Progress in Delaware** *Preschool enrollment, spending stalled in Delaware*

*New Brunswick, NJ*—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide; however, Delaware still serves less than 10% of 4-year-olds in the state, showing no progress over the past 15 years.

*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 Delaware, little has changed since 2002 with preschool enrollment and spending per child relatively flat. On a positive note, the program expanded eligibility to include 3-year-olds for the first time in 2017-2018.

“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. “Delaware is stepping up to include 3-year-olds but they rank among the lowest for 4-year-old access.”

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 Delaware 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.”

### **DELAWARE 2016-2017 Fast Facts**

Met 7 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 831 children, a decrease of 12 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$6,149,300, a decrease of \$60,925 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$7,400, compared to \$7,367 in 2015-16

The state has policies to support preschool Dual Language Learners

National rankings:

- 36 in access for 4-year-olds
- 6 in state spending per child

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 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*