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## **2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Progress in District of Columbia** ***D.C. leads the US in pre-K enrollment and investment per child***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with D.C. again leading on pre-K enrollment – including 88% of 4-year-olds and 66% of 3-year-olds—and spending per child.

*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.

D.C. increased its overall investment in preschool—including extra funding to support Dual Language Learners—as well as raising spending per-child to \$16,996. D.C. leads the nation in spending per child and enrollment percentage for both 3- and 4-year-olds. D.C. pre-K policies met just 4 of NIEER’s 10 quality standards benchmarks, due in part to flexibility given to Public Charter Schools. But the program is implementing new systems to assess pre-K classroom quality through direct observation.

“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. “D.C. once again is a pre-K leader, providing pre-K access for a vast majority of its young children. We are glad to see D.C. taking new steps to address quality.”

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

### **D.C. 2016-2017 Fast Facts**

Met 4 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 13,077 children, an increase of 175 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$222,257,368, an increase of \$3,205,518 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$16,996, compared to \$16,978 in 2015-16

D.C. allocates extra funding to serve DLLs

National rankings:

- 1 in access for 4-year-olds
- 1 in access for 3-year-olds
- 1 in state spending per child

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*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*