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## **2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Progress in Georgia** ***GA celebrates 25 years of public pre-K, increases investment in pre-K***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, as Georgia pre-k celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with increased funding, enrollment, and quality standards.

*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.

Georgia pre-K funding increased nearly 10% as enrollment reached 60% of 4-year-olds statewide—among the top 10 nationwide. Georgia’s Pre-K Program met 8 of NIEER’s 10 quality standards benchmarks, an improvement from last year after policy changes enhanced professional development for preschool staff.

“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. “As Georgia pre-K celebrates its silver anniversary, the state can be proud of its high enrollment rate. But policymakers have more work to do providing resources to ensure high-quality pre-K for all.”

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 GEORGIA 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

### **GEORGIA 2016-2017 Fast Facts**

Met 8 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 80,874 children, an increase of 49 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$348,959,814, an increase of \$31,383,393 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$4,315, compared to \$3,929 in 2015-16

Georgia collects data on preschoolers’ home language; permits bilingual instruction in preschool

National rankings:

- 8 in access for 4-year-olds
- 25 in state spending per child

*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*