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2017 State of Preschool Report Shows Limited Progress in Indiana
IN invests more in pre-K, but ranks low nationwide on enrollment, quality standards

New Brunswick, NJ--New state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Indiana ranking second to last in access to state-funded pre-K.

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.

Indiana increased total funding for pre-K and expanded access, but enrollment still falls far below national average at just 2% of 4-year-olds. Indiana also has few policies in place to support high-quality preschool, meeting three of NIEER’s 10 minimum 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. “Indiana shows promise with increased funding and 15 additional pilot counties in 2017-18, but is also has far to go. Indiana should move beyond a pilot program to enable more children to access high-quality early learning experiences.”

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 Indiana 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.”

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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.

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