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## **2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Challenges in Mississippi** ***Mississippi slowly moving to expand access to high-quality pre-K***

*New Brunswick, NJ*--New state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Mississippi's fledgling pre-K program policies meeting most of NIEER's quality standards benchmarks but enrolling few children so far.

*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.

Mississippi increased total state funding and met 9 of NIEER's 10 quality standards benchmarks. Yet its Early Learning Collaborative program served just 3% of 4-year-olds and even fewer 3-year-olds. State spending per child rose for the collaboratives but remains far below national average.

"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. "Mississippi is focusing on maintaining quality; we urge the state legislators to make increased access to high quality a top education priority."

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 Mississippi 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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### **MISSISSIPPI 2016-2017 Fast Facts**

Met 9 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 1,642 children, a decrease of 139 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$4 million, an increase of \$784,978 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$2,436, compared to \$1,805 in 2015-16

The state does not have specific policies to support preschool Dual Language Learners

National rankings:

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

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

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