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## **2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Challenges in Nebraska** ***Nebraska ranks last in state spending per child enrolled in preschool***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Nebraska ranking above average on enrollment but at the bottom on state 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.

Nebraska's pre-k program served more than 30% of 4-year-olds and 15% of 3-year-olds. State policies met 8 out of NIEER's 10 minimum quality standards benchmarks; however, state funding alone is inadequate to provide high-quality preschool. Nebraska supplements its investment with federal IDEA and Title I dollars.

"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. "Nebraska may not be able to count on federal funding to salvage its pre-K program. State policymakers should commit to providing more children access to high-quality preschool."

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 Nebraska 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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### **NEBRASKA 2016-2017 Fast Facts**

Met 8 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 12,864 children, an increase of 212 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$25,054,777, a decrease of \$4,364,879 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$1,948, compared to \$2,325 in 2015-16

Nebraska permits bilingual instruction in preschool

National rankings:

- 17 in access for 4-year-olds
- 6 in access for 3-year-olds
- 44 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) 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 848-932-4350*