

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2018

NIEER Contact:
Michelle Ruess
848.932.4350

Media Contact:
Morgan Williams
202-836-9890

2017 State of Preschool Report Shows Progress Stalled in New Jersey *NJ celebrates 20 years of Abbott Preschool, new governor pledges to expand pre-K*

New Brunswick, NJ—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with New Jersey continuing as a leader in access for 3-year-olds and state funding 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.

New Jersey has been a leader in providing high-quality preschool to 3- and 4-year-olds, but funding and enrollment stalled in recent years despite a federal Preschool Development Grant supporting expanded access and quality improvements.

“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. “New Jersey funds high-quality preschool in only a small percent of school districts. We look for Governor Murphy to fulfill his pledge to provide all children high-quality, universal pre-K.”

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

NEW JERSEY 2016-2017 Fast Facts

Met 7.8 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

New Jersey enrolled 53,370 children, an increase of 600 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$653,333,890, a decrease of \$8,770,924 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$12,242, compared to \$12,547 in 2015-16

NJ collects information on children’s home language; and several pre-K policies support DLLs

National rankings:

- 21 in access for 4-year-olds
- 3 in access for 3-year-olds
- 2 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.

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