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2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Progress in New Mexico
NM boosts pre-K funding, maintains quality standards as enrollment tops 10,000

New Brunswick, NJ—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with New Mexico enrolling more than 10,000 children, including more than a third of all 4-year-olds.

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 Mexico increased its investment in state pre-K; but as enrollment also grew, state spending-per-child dropped by $245, when adjusted for inflation. New Mexico’s policies support high-quality in most respects, meeting nine of NIEER’s 10 minimum quality standards benchmarks, but teacher quality could benefit from higher standards and pay.

“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 Mexico is making good on its commitment to expand high-quality preschool, doubling enrollment over the past four years while maintaining quality standards.”

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 NEW MEXICO 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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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.

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