

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2017 State of Preschool Report Finds Challenges in Oklahoma *OK preschool enrollment, funding remains relatively unchanged*

New Brunswick, NJ—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Oklahoma a national leader on enrollment but struggling with state funding cuts.

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.

Oklahoma pre-K enrolled 73% of 4-year-olds and 4% of the 3-year-olds. State spending for preschool declined slightly in Oklahoma, adjusting for inflation. Oklahoma has implemented policies to support young Dual Language Learners.

“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. “Oklahoma continued implementing pre-K in a predominately school-day program. But the state’s low investment in education and teachers raises questions going forward.”

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 OKLAHOMA 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

OKLAHOMA 2016-2017 Fast Facts

Met 7 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 41,264 children, an increase of 23 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$144,470,607, a decrease of \$317,887 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$3,501, compared to \$3,511 in 2015-16

Pre-K teachers required to have training/qualifications to work with DLLs; Collects data on preschoolers’ home language

National rankings:

- 4 in access for 4-year-olds
- 19 in access for 3-year-olds
- 33 in state spending per child

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.

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

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