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2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Progress in Pennsylvania *Pennsylvania increases pre-K funding and enrollment*

New Brunswick, NJ—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Pennsylvania boosting state pre-K funding and enrolling more children statewide across four state-funded pre-K programs.

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. 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.

Pennsylvania pre-K spending grew by \$31 million (adjusted for inflation), or 17%, with state spending per child ranking among the top 10 nationally. Enrollment grew to 13% of 4-year-olds and 6.5% of 3-year-olds across all four programs, yet remained below national average. Pennsylvania lacks 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. “Pennsylvania made strides in pre-K funding but access remains limited and two state programs met few of our quality standards benchmarks.”

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

Pennsylvania 2016-2017 Fast Facts

Met 6.9 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Pennsylvania enrolled 28,833 children, an increase of 2,030 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$209,159,001, an increase of \$31,053,877 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$7,254, compared to \$6,645 in 2015-16

Pennsylvania does not have policies to support preschool DLLs

National rankings:

- 30 in access for 4-year-olds
- 14 in access for 3-year-olds
- 7 in state spending per child

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 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