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NIEER Contact:  
Michelle Ruess  
848.932.4350

Media Contact:  
Morgan Williams  
202-836-9890

## **2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Progress in Rhode Island** ***RI is a leader on pre-K quality standards, but enrollment remains low***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Rhode Island increasing its investment in preschool, expanding enrollment and meeting all quality standards benchmarks.

*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.

Rhode Island's pre-K program served just 9% of 4-year-olds—but that equaled a 70% increase in enrollment over last year. Total state spending increased more than \$1 million (inflation-adjusted) although state spending per child remained relatively low, supplemented by federal Preschool Development Grant funding.

"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. "Rhode Island can be proud of meeting all 10 quality standards benchmarks and expanding pre-k access. But with fewer than 1 in 10 4-year-olds enrolled, more progress is needed."

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 Rhode Island 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).

### **RHODE ISLAND 2016-2017 Fast Facts**

Met 10 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 1,008 children, an increase of 414 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$5,149,554, an increase of \$1,160,419 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$5,109, compared to \$6,716 in 2015-16

Rhode Island collects data on children's home language; has policies to support preschool Dual Language Learners

National rankings:

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

*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](http://www.nieer.org).*

*The National Institute for Early Education Research ([www.nieer.org](http://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](mailto:mruess@nieer.org) 848-932-4350*

*Local pre-K advocacy group: Leanne Barrett, Rhode Island Kids Count, [lbarrett@rikidscount.org](mailto:lbarrett@rikidscount.org), 401.351.9400, x 23*