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April 18, 2018

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2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Progress in Wisconsin ***Wisconsin leads in preschool access, but meets few quality standards***

New Brunswick, NJ—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Wisconsin increasing state pre-K funding and expanding enrollment.

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.

Wisconsin was a leader in state pre-K access, enrolling 72% of 4-year-olds statewide. State spending increased overall, along with per-child spending. State pre-K met only 3 of NIEER's 10 minimum quality standards benchmarks, reflecting the high degree of local policy control. Statewide evaluation of quality and effectiveness could provide reassurance and guide any needed corrections if quality has fallen short in some places.

"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. "Wisconsin is an example for other states aspiring to provide universal pre-K. But the degree of local control does raise some concerns about variations in program quality."

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 Wisconsin 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).

Wisconsin 2016-2017 Fast Facts

Met 3 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 51,973 children, an increase of 422 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$195,864,098, an increase of \$4,443,759 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$3,769, compared to \$3,713 in 2015-16

Wisconsin does not have policies to support preschool Dual Language Learners

National rankings:

- 5 in access for 4-year-olds
- 26 in access for 3-year-olds
- 30 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.

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