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Guam Increased Funding for Preschool but Enrollment Did Not Change

National report says it's a "time to choose," as states have bounced back unevenly from the pandemic when it comes to preschool enrollment and quality

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) today released its annual *State of Preschool* report, which tracks preschool enrollment, funding, and quality across states. The 2023 *State of Preschool Yearbook* found that, in the 2022-2023 school year:

- Guam served 2% of 4-year-olds and did not enroll any 3-year-olds in state-funded preschool.
- Total preschool enrollment was 57, unchanged from the prior year.
- Preschool spending totaled \$465,712, up \$159,021 (52%), adjusted for inflation, since last year.
- Spending per child equaled \$8,170 in 2022-2023, up \$2,790 from 2021-2022, adjusted for inflation.
- Guam met 6 of 10 research-based quality standards benchmarks for minimum quality recommended by NIEER.

"Our report on the 2022-2023 school year found that Guam leaders had work to do to improve preschool enrollment and quality. We encourage Guam to work towards expanding access to preschool and improving quality," **said W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D., NIEER's senior co-director and founder.** "We applaud Guam for being the only U.S. territory funding preschool and for the large increase in overall and per child spending this past year."

Nationally, the report finds that this is a critical moment for preschool. The nation has emerged, albeit unevenly, from the COVID-19 Pandemic. States are poised to make new progress toward serving more 3- and 4-year-olds in high-quality, full-day preschool programs. How each state chooses to move forward – and whether the federal government helps – will determine how much real progress is made. Most states have not committed to serving all children, and even those states that have often fall short. Most states need to increase funding per child substantially to enable providers to meet minimal standards for a high-quality, effective program.

During the 2022-2023 school year, states enrolled over 1.63 million children in preschool, marking a 7% surge compared to the preceding year. Preschool enrollment reached 35% of 4-year-olds and 7% of 3-year-olds, with state expenditures reaching \$11.73 billion—an 11% increase from 2021-2022 when adjusted for inflation. Notably, state spending per child surpassed \$7,000 for the first time. However, despite this notable progress, most states still fell short of their pre-pandemic preschool enrollment. While several states made strides towards achieving universal preschool access, six states persisted in not allocating any funding for preschool programs.

"With the pandemic in the rear view, it is time for states and territories to choose whether they are going to support high-quality preschool and how," **said Allison Friedman-Krauss, Ph.D., the report's lead author.** "Will they commit to serving all 4-year-olds? Will they serve both 3- and 4-year-olds? Will they make the investments needed to ensure that programs are effective? Will they support an equitable mixed-delivery model for preschool incorporating both existing child care programs and public schools? How will they recruit, support, and retain preschool teachers? These decisions will impact millions of children for years to come."

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The 2023 State of Preschool Yearbook was supported with funding from the Heising-Simons Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. 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 at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research and the translation of research to policy and practice.