



For Immediate Release:

April 22, 2026

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New Mexico Pre-K Access and Spending Continue to Increase as the State Sets an Example for Others

New Mexico could join Georgia in being top in nation in both preschool access and quality

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. A new national [report](#) released today finds that New Mexico ranks 11th in preschool access for four-year-olds, up from 12th last year. The state ranked 7th in preschool access for three-year-olds, down from 6th last year. In 2024-2025 New Mexico reached 53% of four-year-olds and 22% of three-year-olds as the state moves closer to universal preschool for three- and four-year-olds. New Mexico remained 5th in the nation in state spending per child.

The [National Institute for Early Education Research's 2025 State of Preschool Yearbook](#) presents a critical snapshot of preschool education in America. Currently, 44 states and DC fund preschool programs. Most state pre-K programs continue to primarily or only serve four-year-olds. Nationally, enrollment reached 37% of four-year-olds but only 9% of three-year-olds.

Additional New Mexico findings for the 2024-2025 school year:

- New Mexico PreK enrolled 16,429 children, an increase of 334 from the prior year.
- State spending totaled \$226,085,608, up \$9,246,573 (4%), adjusted for inflation, since last year.
- State spending per child equaled \$13,761 in 2024-2025, up \$289 from 2023-2024, adjusted for inflation.
- New Mexico met 9 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

"New Mexico has demonstrated a strong commitment to young children. The state has emerged as a preschool leader," **said NIEER director Steve Barnett**. "As the state also expands access to universal, free child care, leaders must remember that only high-quality programs can produce the strong outcomes promised by the research."

Nationally, state support for preschool education hit record highs in enrollment and funding in 2024-2025. The pace of growth slowed, however, compared to the prior year, and many states continue to lag behind pre-pandemic enrollment levels.

Georgia's state-funded pre-K program for 4-year-olds made history this year. It became the largest state-funded preschool program in the nation to meet all 10 quality benchmarks recommended by NIEER, and the first universal program to do so. Only five additional states meet all 10 of NIEER's research-based benchmarks for quality – Alabama, Hawaii, Michigan, Mississippi, and Rhode Island—in this year's report. None of those programs have the reach of Georgia's Pre-K Program. NIEER's benchmarks measure essential preschool quality indicators, including teacher qualifications, class sizes, early learning standards, and curriculum supports.

"New Mexico could soon join the list of states meeting all 10 benchmarks by implementing the requirement that all teachers regardless of setting have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education," **said Allison Friedman-Krauss, the report's lead author**. "The state could join Georgia as a universal state meeting all 10 benchmarks"

States spent nearly \$14.4 billion on preschool in 2024-2025. Twenty-eight states increased their investments in preschool from the prior year, for a total increase of \$434 million, or 3%, adjusted for

NEW MEXICO: 2025 NATIONAL RANKINGS

- Enrollment at age 4: 11th (53%)
- Enrollment at age 3: 7th (22%)
- State spending per child: 5th (\$13,761)
- All reported spending per child: 7th (\$13,761)
- Total benchmarks met: 9

inflation. Including federal and local dollars, total spending was almost \$17.7 billion. Three states each spent more than \$1 billion last year: California (\$4.1 billion), New Jersey (\$1.2 billion), and New York (\$1 billion). Together, these three states account for 45% of all state preschool spending. Texas adds almost another \$1 billion.

Additional information about the *2025 State of Preschool Yearbook*, including individual state profiles and maps, graphs, and state rankings, can be found at www.nieer.org.

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The 2025 State of Preschool Yearbook was supported with funding from the Heising-Simons Foundation and the Gates Foundation.

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.