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**Contact:**

Allison Muhlenhoff, *Longleaf Strategies*, [allison@longleafstrategies.com](mailto:allison@longleafstrategies.com), (334) 450-1027 (m)

## New York State Farther from Universal Preschool, Needs to Fund Greater Access

*NYS and NYC move towards Universal Child Care access. However, researchers warn that access without quality isn't enough to improve student outcomes. Meanwhile, Georgia Pre-K sets a new example for the nation.*

**NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.** A new national [report](#) released today finds that New York remains 9<sup>th</sup> in the nation in providing preschool to four-year-olds, despite a decrease in enrollment. The state also ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in preschool access for three-year-olds, down from 7<sup>th</sup> last year. In 2024-2025, New York State, reached 56% of four-year-olds and 17% of three-year-olds. New York ranked 21<sup>st</sup> in state spending per child but 4<sup>th</sup> in all-reporting spending per child which includes local and federal funding for preschool.

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 York findings for the 2024-2025:

- New York preschool enrolled 153,004 children, a decrease of 5,952 from the prior year.
- State spending totaled \$1,028,061,297, up \$10,409,156 (1%), adjusted for inflation, since last year.
- State spending per child equaled \$6,719 in 2024-2025, up \$317 from 2023-2024, adjusted for inflation.
- New York met 7 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

"New York has plans to deliver universal child care to children under five but must not lose track of its goal for universal preschool," **said NIEER director Steve Barnett.** "New York should also provide additional, adequate funding so that all districts across the state can offer preschool and enroll each child whose family wants public preschool."

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 four-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 York should be applauded for improving funding per child for preschool and must prioritize funding quality programs," **said Allison Friedman-Krauss, lead author of the report.** "When states invest in quality programs that can produce strong outcomes, they invest in a better future for children and taxpayers."

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

### NEW YORK: 2025 NATIONAL RANKINGS

- Enrollment at age 4: 9th (56%)
- Enrollment at age 3: 9th (17%)
- State spending per child: 21st (\$6,719)
- All reported spending per child: 4th (\$16,940)
- Total benchmarks met: 7\*

total increase of \$434 million, or 3%, adjusted for inflation. Including federal and local dollars, total spending was almost \$17.7 billion. New York was one of three states that 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](http://www.nieer.org).

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*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.*