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## **2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Problems in Missouri** ***State pre-K funding decreases, enrollment very low in Missouri***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Missouri slashing pre-K funding and ranking near the bottom on 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.

Missouri cut pre-k spending by more than \$2 million (adjusted for inflation) --18%-- and spending per child fell by more than \$1,000 to a level well below the national average. Missouri pre-K serves 2.5% of 4-year-olds and 1% of 3-year-olds statewide. Missouri meets 8 of NIEER's 10 quality standards benchmarks.

"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. "Missouri is at serious risk of leaving children behind. The state needs to increase its pre-K investment so more children can benefit from high-quality early learning opportunities."

This year's report includes a special section on policies affecting Dual Language Learners (DLLs), and also highlights changes since 2002, when NIEER began tracking state pre-K. (*see box for MISSOURI 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."

### **MISSOURI 2016-2017 Fast Facts**

Met 8 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 2,646 children, an increase of 157 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$9,703,786, a decrease of \$2,165,945 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$3,667, compared to \$4,769 in 2015-16

Missouri collects data on preschoolers' home language; no policies to support preschool DLLs

#### National rankings:

- 42 in access for 4-year-olds
- 23 in access for 3-year-olds
- 31 in state spending per child

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*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*