

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2017 State of Preschool Report Shows Texas Lags on Quality ***Texas leads on policies for Dual Language Learners but meets few quality benchmarks***

New Brunswick, NJ—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Texas expanding access to preschool for 4-year-olds but falling short on policies to support high-quality classroom practices.

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.

In Texas, spending per child continued to slide, adjusting for inflation, and the state also backtracked on new funding for quality improvement so the situation is likely to get worse. The state, which serves a large number of Dual Language Learners (DLLs) in state pre-K, has strong policies supporting them—Texas is one of only three states requiring lead teachers to have a bilingual certification to teaching preschool DLLs.

“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. “Texas is setting the bar for supporting young Dual Language Learners but needs to increase investment in high-quality to enhance outcomes for all children.”

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 Texas 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

TEXAS 2016-2017 Fast Facts

Met 4 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Texas enrolled 224,114 children, an increase of 3,474 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$862,035,287, a decrease of \$45,052,035 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$3,846, compared to \$4,111 in 2015-16

Texas requires teacher certification for teaching preschool Dual Language Learners

National rankings:

- 10 in access for 4-year-olds
- 13 in access for 3-year-olds
- 28 in state spending per child

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). 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

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