

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **2017 State of Preschool Report Shows Lack of Progress in Washington *WA pre-K investment falls, enrollment flatlines as high-quality pre-K serves too few***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Washington providing preschool programs to just 5% of 3-year-olds and 8% of 4-year-olds statewide.

*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 Washington, both pre-K enrollment and total state investment were flat, although the total state investment and per-child funding declined when adjusting for inflation.

“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. “Washington demonstrates a strong commitment to high-quality pre-K through relatively high investment. Unfortunately, few children have access.”

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 Washington 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 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*

### **WASHINGTON 2016-2017 Fast Facts**

Met 8 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 11,691 children--same as in 2015-16

Total state funding = \$96,325,951, a decrease of \$1,729,991 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$8,239, compared to \$8,387 in 2015-16

Washington collects information on preschooler’s home language; has policies supporting preschool Dual Language Learners

#### National rankings:

- 34 in access for 4-year-olds
- 17 in access for 3-year-olds
- 4 in state spending per child

*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*